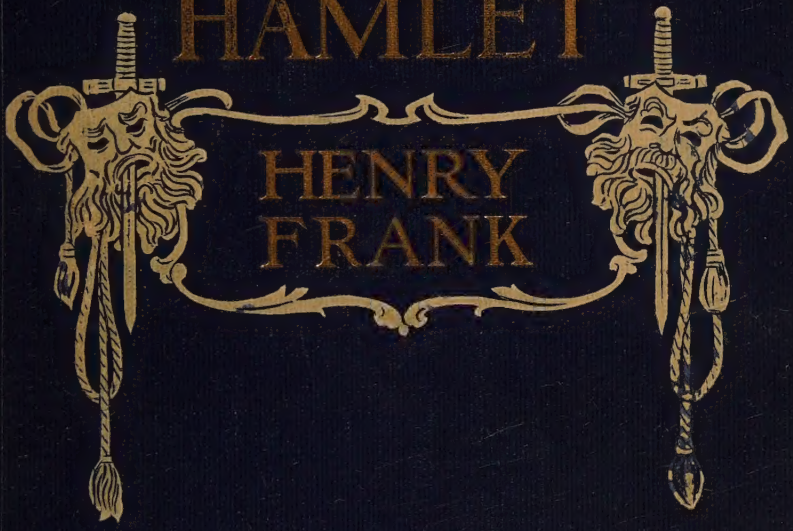
THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET



HENRY FRANK

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DAVID GARRICK AS HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned
Thou comest in such questionable shape,
That I will speak with thee. ACT I, SC. IV.

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET

A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

BY

HENRY FRANK

AUTHOR OF "MODERN LIGHT ON IMMORTALITY," "THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH," "THE MASTERY OF MIND," "THE KINGDOM OF LOVE," ETC., ETC.

BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1910

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PRINTED IN U. S. A.

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I

THE PURPORT OF THE GHOST

THE PURPORT OF THE GHOST

I CALL the play of "Hamlet" a psychological drama, because, as it appears to me, the author therein seems to depict the development of a singular mind, through various stages of transformation, from that of lofty reason and intellectuality to an unbalanced and half demented condition. It seems to me that Shakespeare was conscious of the philosophical trend of this effort, and that he introduced extraordinary situations, not merely to heighten the dramatic quality of the performance, but purposely to discourse upon an arcane and most recondite psychological theme. We will, I think, the more readily recognize the force of this theory, if we examine the original source from which the author drew the data of his drama.

It is admitted by all critics of note that Shakespeare appropriated for the broad outline of his play a rude tragedy, originally written in French and published in the middle of the 16th century, by Francis de Belleforest, and afterwards translated into English under the title of "The Hystorie of Hamblet." It is very

evident to the most casual reader of the translation of this French narrative that Shakespeare sought but little elsewhere for any of the remarkable situations in his drama, and that he would have but little need for further search, as the original story in itself is sufficiently dramatic, not to say tragical, to satisfy his most ardent imagination.

But the first startling fact we confront in comparing the original French play with that of Shakespeare's Hamlet is that the latter introduces an entirely original situation, and that a most startling one, in order to account for the extraordinary condition of Hamlet's mind, and for the bold deed he finally consummated. Nowhere in the original can a trace of the supernatural or the occult be discerned. De Belleforest's "Hamlet" becomes merely a natural avenger of his father's murderous death, by first killing all the new king's drunken courtiers. Then hastening to the king himself, whom he found in hiding, he angrily thrusts his sword through his neck and consummates the brutal deed by cleaving his head from his shoulders. The original story reads like one of those crude

and primitive bloody revels with which the Walhalla of the Norse gods is so replete.*

That the author should be able to deduce from such a rude theme of savagery and barbarism the subtly intellectual and profoundly philosophical story of our "Hamlet," is another illustration of the supreme quality of his genius. It would seem that the thought presented itself to Shakespeare in this wise: "If I portray Hamlet merely as a crude and brutal murderer, spurred

* True, in a faint manner the germinal idea of the ghost had originally existed in the Hamlet legend immediately preceding the creation of the now extant Shakespeare Hamlet. In the first setting of the legend of the Danish Hamlet by Saxo Grammaticus in the 13th Century there was no intimation of the supernatural; this consisted merely of a straightforward historical tradition relating to 'Amleth' an ancient Danish king. Nor as the legend first appears in dramatic literature is there any suggestion of the supernatural. In Belleforest' original French creation, there is no intimation whatever of a ghost. But it seems that there was an old and now lost original English drama, which was written after the manner of the Belleforest play, and which seems to have been the direct pattern for the Shakespeare Hamlet in which the first intimation of the "Ghost" appears. It is, however, a very vague and indifferent suggestion, and shows how wondrously Shakespeare weaves a mere hint of an idea into a glorious and most triumphant creation. The mere reference to the supernatural in the old play was a cry, which a flitting ghost uttered, "Hamlet revenge!" and then disappeared. From this slender suggestion of the supernatural Shakespeare worked out the wonderful character of the "ghost" in the existing play, which compels the attention of the reader in a degree second only to that of the heroic melancholy Dane.

to his deed by the discovery of his usurpatious uncle's felony, it will make but slight appeal to the imagination or to philosophical contemplation. Why should I not conjure a profounder motive for Hamlet's impetuous and venturesome deed; why not picture him as a refined, courteous, lofty-souled and most superior gentleman, whose mind has in some way been grossly affected by a revelation so horrifying in its nature, it would of itself be sufficient to unseat his reason and torment his being?"

In the original story the murder of the reigning king is not done in secret, but, on the contrary, on the occasion of a court carousal which was indulged in by the courtiers and the vulgar royalty of the realm. These (fearing the fury of the murderer, who has not only slain the king, but secured the widow for his wife, and usurped the throne) become his willing tools and assist him to conceal the truth from the people, who, knowing the facts, would become rebellious. Hamlet, therefore, in de Belleforest's story, betrayed by his mother and outraged by his usurpatious uncle, *assumed* the air of a madman to save himself from slaughter, and to devise a plan whereby he may "catch the king."

Now, Shakespeare, by virtue of his keen inventiveness, discovering the possibility of introducing a feature which would both intensify the dramatic interest of the play and suggest a profoundly philosophical theme, while naturally allowing room for the introduction of erudition and philosophical thought, divines an altogether different reason for Hamlet's "antic disposition." His startling innovation consists in the introduction of the Ghost!

He employs this dramatic instrumentality, however, in an altogether rare and remarkable manner. The ghost is introduced not merely to affright the beholder, as in the plays of Julius Caesar and Richard III.; or to exploit the possibilities and indecencies of Witchcraft, as in Macbeth; or, even yet, as in Midsummer Night's Dream to tickle the sensible delight of the audience by the elfin witchery and magic merriment of Puck's and Oberon's realm.

The ghost of Hamlet is apparently introduced as distinctively a mental phenomenon, by which the author is enabled to portray the psychological workings of a deeply thoughtful and melancholy mind, and to intimate for the reader's

benefit the delicate law that underlies the phenomenon of ethereal apparitions. In order to appreciate the author's purpose in the employment of this arcane agency, it will be necessary, it seems to me, to contrast its use with that of other spectral manifestations in Shakespearean plays. In all his other dramas, excepting of course Midsummer Night's Dream, which is palpably fantastical and beyond the limitations of any law, the ghost is purely subjective, and can be detected by none other than the individual for whose fright or punishment it makes its appearance. At the banquet, so unceremoniously interrupted by Macbeth, because of what the guests believed to be a sudden stroke of illness, none but he beholds the ghost of Banquo; not even Lady Macbeth discerns it, but excitedly and with much confusion, exclaims to all: "Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once."

Likewise before the battle of Phillipi, it is Brutus alone who witnesses the wandering spirit of Caesar that assures him it will meet him again on the field of action. Richard alone is terrorized beyond reclaim by the appearance of the spirits of his slain victims before the battle of

Bosworth, and they achieve their mission by so unnerving him in his contest with Richmond that he falls ingloriously, and the kingdom is redeemed.

In all these situations the nature of the ghost is not so refined or inexplicable as to present much difficulty in explaining its *raison d'etre*, or fitting it into a rational philosophy of the mind. But in the case of the Hamlet-ghost there are many more difficult problems involved, and the treatment is altogether more refined, and suggestive of recent psychological discoveries.

The first distinctive feature which challenges our investigation is the intimation that the ghost appears as a subjective creation not to one individual alone, but to several, and repeatedly on several different occasions. Naturally this circonstance suggests considerable difficulty in seeking to unravel Shakespeare's philosophy of the supernatural, and in discerning the conformity of the phenomenon with scientific discoveries of recent date, or with what were extant at the time the author wrote.

It is at once evident that the ghost is so startlingly introduced that the skeptical intel-

lectuality and clearly philosophical pose of Hamlet's mind may be the better emphasized. It will be noted how gradually the author approaches the climax of Hamlet's conviction that the apparition is a certainty. He does not abruptly introduce the subject either to Hamlet, or to the reader. He discovers those first who had already reached the conviction that the apparition was more than a mental delusion; and yet who feel that they can scarcely trust their senses, and would, therefore, before they reveal the fact to Lord Hamlet, wish to have their courage and conviction reinforced. Hence the author takes the next step.

He introduces a character, Horatio, who is a confirmed skeptic, and equally learned with Hamlet himself. He also makes the skepticism of this character quite apparent by causing him at first to scout the whole story when those who first saw the vision reveal the circumstance to him. Horatio however is soon convinced that his friends are not deceived and that the appearance of the ghost is not only indisputable, but that it is manifestly that of Hamlet's deceased father. Hamlet's initial skepticism, therefore, is much

allayed, because his curiosity is largely satisfied by the fact that his well-known scholarly friend, Horatio, had himself concluded that the vision could not be all a figment and delusion of the mind. Therefore, it will be observed, Shakespeare takes good care to have Horatio first introduce the subject to Hamlet, and to have him use Marcellus and Bernardo merely as witnesses. Then we perceive, in the questions Hamlet himself puts to Horatio, the gradual breaking down of his initial doubt.

Howbeit, Horatio has reached the climax of his revelation by most gradual stages, nevertheless, when he comes to tell Hamlet that he thinks he saw his father's spirit the night before, the latter, although perplexed with horror and amazement, has still strength enough to hold his mental poise and ask most suggestive and penetrating questions. "Where was this?" "How did he look?" "Was he armed?" "Did you speak to it?" "Saw you not his countenance? Was it pale or red?" "Did he fix his eyes on you?" Then, thinking that if it was in truth his father's spirit it must, having been a soldier, present the stains of the battle field, or, by some prescience

thinking possibly he might have been murdered, he asks excitedly, "His beard was grizzled? No?" Then at last accoutred with sufficient knowledge to convince himself that the narrative is true he resolves, not yet wholly satisfied till he shall personally behold the apparition, to go and watch with them, if perchance the ghost again appear.

In the scenes wherein the ghost presents itself certainly Shakespeare has worked up a most realistic story and makes escape from conviction almost impossible. He would seem to leave no room whatsoever for the theory of delusion or fraud. Every ground of doubt is apparently removed and the intelligence and personality of the spirit seem to be most authentically evinced. There are those who therefore naturally conclude that Shakespeare meant to advocate the theory of the existence and appearance of ghosts as commonplace and actual affairs. But we must remember that the story of Hamlet was written in the sixteenth century, when the belief in ghosts was almost universal, and was doubted only by the few studious or philosophical individuals who rose superior to the masses. Shakespeare has most deftly woven the net of circumstances so

neatly round the mind of Hamlet that his subjective discernment of the apparition is well within the scope of the psychological law.

Walter Scott in his "Witchcraft and Demonology" says: "Enthusiastic feelings of an impressive and solemn nature occur both in public and in private life, which seem to add ocular testimony to an intercourse between earth and the world beyond it. For example, the son who has lately been deprived of his father feels a sudden crisis approach, in which he is anxious to have recourse to his sagacious advice, — or a bereaved husband earnestly desires again to behold the form of which the grave has deprived him forever, — or to use a darker yet more common instance, the wretched man who has dipped his hand in his fellow creature's blood, is haunted by the apprehension that the phantom of the slain stands by the bed-side of the murderer."

It will be observed that these are the exact conditions on which Shakespeare bases the possibility of the appearance of the spirit of the elder Hamlet. However, there is this distinguishing feature: Instead of having the spirit appear to the mind of the murderer, it appears to another

whom it seeks to charge with the mission of revenge. Why then should the spirit appear to Hamlet rather than to Claudius, the murderous king? It is evident, in all the speeches that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of the king he makes him seem to be a most hard-hearted and bold-spirited person. He would appear to have a flinty mind and nerves of steel. In the midst of all suspicion he never winces, or emits the slightest intimation, by look or action, of his awful deed. He is not given to grief or pain; and severely chides Hamlet for exposing his weakness by undue mourning. "To persevere in obstinate condolement is a course of impious stubbornness," he exclaims to Hamlet, with intended rebuke. He has but little imagination, and intellect not more than average. He is given to carousals, physical indulgence, and thoughtless pastime. He is not easily unnerved or disturbed.

Therefore, according to the known laws of psychological phenomena he would prove to be an unsensitive and unsuggestible subject through which to produce the deliverance of a spiritistic message. On the contrary, Hamlet

is hypersensitive, intellectual, melancholy and contemplative. His physique, nervous temperament and mental state are all amenable to intrusions from the subjective world. Hence it is more natural that such visions should appear to the young Hamlet to taunt him to vengeance than that they should appear to the stolid and sturdy king, to tantalize and affright him.

More than this, Hamlet is in the precise state of mind that makes him singularly amenable to such experiences, and from all known psychological laws, one would suppose that he would be far more likely to see visions than that he should escape such an experience. He has been brooding for several months on the one sad theme of his life; namely that his father died, (he knows not yet that he was murdered); and that his mother married so speedily after his lamentable fate. So deep is his grief because of these sad events that he groans:

> "O, that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter."

There is nothing more in this life for him; it is a "barren promontory." He takes no delight in

man or woman, and his very studies clog and fester in his brain. His melancholy is so profound that his mind is diseased: full of dark broodings, sinister forebodings and "bad dreams." More fit subject for the intrusion of subjective visions from another world could scarcely be conceived. Naturally, then, when the suggestion of the ghost is given him, he falls quickly to it, after his first doubts are dissolved, and permits himself to be carried to greater lengths than his friends who first saw it.

Now when the ghost itself appears we shall see how completely its revelation and its acts comport with modern discoveries in the occult. It will be noted that the appearances of the ghost are graduated in distinctness, from vagueness to opaque reality; from its first observation by Marcellus and Bernardo, its second discovery by Horatio, to its final presentation to Hamlet. When the ghost appears to Horatio, Bernardo evidences his astonishment at the distinctness of the apparition, and that it bears such likeness to the king. Before that, in conversing about the ghost's appearances, the first two had called it "the thing," as something indistinct and nebulous.

But when Horatio comes, who is still closer to Hamlet than the other two, it seems to take on a more manifest and convincing form. At last when Hamlet sees it, it is so startlingly clear and strong, and pauses so long for him minutely to observe it, that there is opportunity even for extended conversation and familiarity. When Horatio ventures to speak to it, let it not be forgotten, the spirit passes on, as if offended, and speedily disappears. But when Hamlet accosts it, although in such questionable and uncertain language it might sensitively take umbrage, it merely beckons to him to come away that it may be alone with him. And this final act is of the greatest importance in ferreting out the psychological phases of this strange story. For all these steps are either indicative of Shakespeare's almost prophetic knowledge of modern scientific discovery, or were instant intuitions of his own, that now most accurately harmonize with what we know of such arcane, and sometime mysterious subjects.

In short, my tentative solution of the problem is this:—Hamlet, through much dark and continuous brooding, constantly retained in his mind

the vivid picture of his father, as he imagined him to lie in death, possibly clad with the habiliments of war, and therefore blotched ("grizzled") with the stains of blood. So long, so intently and profoundly had he carried in his mind's eye this solemn and affecting picture, that it had worn out his peace of soul and gathered round him a vague and haunting figure, which hung like a veil of gloom and ill-forboding over him. He had often intimated his grief to Horatio and his fellows, as we see in that conversation, wherein Horatio says: "My lord, I came to see your father's funeral;" Hamlet sorrowfully interrupts and says, "I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student; I think it was to see my mother's wedding. Would I had met my dearest foe in Heaven, or ever I had seen that day, Horatio."

It is clearly the one constant, beglooming and heart-sickening thought which encumbers his mind. What, then, more natural, than that through this brooding mental mood, the psychic visual picture—according to what we now vaguely call the laws of telapathy,—should have cast its mould on the minds of his fellow students,

WILLIAM C. MACREADY AS HAMLET

Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further. Act I, Sc. V.

and that when "the witching time of night" approached, and they were naturally given to quivering and uncanny feelings, this subjective picture should grow clearer till at last it became objectivized and forced them to believe they saw it in the air?

All who are familiar with recent investigations of alleged spirit manifestations will observe that my theory rests strongly on what deductions psychological students have made from their observations.

Says Hudson in his "Law of Psychic Phenomena," "A phantom, or ghost, is nothing more or less, than an intensified telepathic vision; its objectivity, power, persistency, and permanence being in exact proportion to the intensity of the emotion and desire which called it into being. It is the embodiment of an idea, a thought. It is endowed with the intelligence pertaining to that one thought, and no more." He also observes the well-known fact that when the ghost fulfils its mission it never appears again on this planet.

Now all these features are well carried out in Shakespeare's phases of the ghost's appearance, and if they are to be accepted as finally scien-

tific then it is manifest that Shakespeare has antedated modern science by many centuries.

Hudson reminds us that the permanence of the phases of the ghost will be in exact proportion to the desire or mental state that called it forth. This would explain why the appearance was more vague to Marcellus and Bernado than to Horatio, and less clear to Horatio than to Hamlet. The original vision or psychic portrait is in the mind of Hamlet—created by his dismal mental state, and the portentous events which generated it; by telepathy, that picture would be conveyed to the minds of Marcellus and Bernado somewhat vaguely, because of their more distant relation to Hamlet; while the vision would assume a more positive and realistic phase to Horatio, because his mind was more kindered with that of Hamlet, and because their spirits were mutually more cordial and congenial. When at last, however, Hamlet himself sees the ghost, then it looms on his ocular vision with the opaque reality of sensible objects; because, having already grown familiar with it, subjectively, through long contemplation, he could easily imagine it projecting itself in actual form before him.

I am quite aware that heretofore no one, at least to my knowledge, has sought to study Shakespeare's tragedy from this psychological point of view, but it seems to me such study is thoroughly legitimate, and may prove that he was more of a genius in penetrating fields of unfrequented knowledge than is commonly supposed. When we recall that Walter Scott in the first quarter of the nineteenth century could do no more with so-called psychic phenomena than brush them all aside as either fraudulent or delusive, we see to what a far reach of foresight Shakespeare's mind must have penetrated if, whether consciously or unconsciously, he so planned the apparitions of the ghost in Hamlet as to make them wholly amenable to alleged modern discoveries.

A closer study of the observations of the ghost made by its beholders in the play, will show us, too, how Shakespeare would seem to wish us to interpret it. When they see the apparition the question naturally arises as to the causes of its appearance. Marcellus asks and Horatio answers. To make the story more interesting, and to give color to the theory that the phenomenon is the ef-

fect of a subjective experience of Hamlet himself, Horatio proceeds to explain that the warlike appearance of the spirit is indicative of approaching troubles, consequent on former questions of state.

There is not the slightest intimation that the apparition had aught to do personally with Hamlet, and manifestly such a thought not yet entered the minds of any of them. They feel impelled to reveal the strange apparition to him, merely because it possesses the phantom-appearance of his father; and he, so long grieving over his father's death, might be somewhat comforted. This seems to be their only interpretation of the situation. Neither does Hamlet apparently think that the phantom has any special mission to fulfil on his own account, and, to all appearance is inordinately surprised when the ghost reveals the fact that the body of his father was slain by the reigning king, his uncle.

Was this, however, wholly a surprise? Had not this thought subjectively lain in the mind of Hamlet, in a vague and uncertain manner, and did he not hear from the lips of the ghost that only which he had so long half-consciously enter-

tained in his heart of hearts? I am inclined to think the latter conclusion is the correct one. There is a passage in the conversation between the ghost and Hamlet which, strange to say, has been but little commented on.

Ghost: If ever thou didst thy dear father love
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murther.
Hamlet: Murther!
Ghost: Murther most foul, as it is at best;
Now, Hamlet hear:
"'Tis given out that sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; . . . but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears the crown."
Hamlet: *O my prophetic soul!*
My uncle!

Here is a clear intimation that the thought that his father had been foully murdered by his uncle had already existed in his mind, but he was loath to give it expression even to himself. But when he hears the ghost proclaim it, then suddenly the rush of memory crowds upon his mind

and he hears himself cry aloud, "Oh, I knew it; I felt it; O, my prophetic soul, thou wert right!" This is manifestly the force of the entire passage, and reveals the psychological purport of Hamlet's mental vision.

Having already, in the profound depths of his being, felt that the king was the real murderer; having long been taunted by the fearful theory which he would not dare act upon as a fact without more satisfactory proof; it grows to such proportions in his mind, that it imparts its influence telepathically to his fellows, till they behold the ocular apparition, which is but the psychic reflex of his own mental state. Then, when they emphasize his fears and anticipations, by assuring him that they have seen his father's ghost, he, hastening to behold it for himself, once more feels, only with intensified emotion, all the former intimations of his soul, and with too eager readiness accepts whatever may impress him. Thinking, then, that he sees the ghost and that it bears such perfect likeness to the psychic portrait he had so long been contemplating, he accepts the apparition as an objective fact, and agrees to follow it till they are alone together in

the yawning church yard, when at last, all that he had ever dreamed of, or anticipated, concerning this foul tragedy, rises to his mind with such absolute confirmation, that he cannot but believe it is indeed the ghost itself which reveals it to him and corroborates his theory of the murder.

Again, we may observe the intimation by Shakespeare that he somewhat understood the psychological laws which underly "spirit" apparitions, in the conversation which immediately ensues when the ghost bids Hamlet to depart with him.

Hamlet: It waves me still.
Go on, I'll follow thee.
Marcellus: You shall not go my lord.
Hamlet: Hold off your hands.
Horatio: Be rul'd; you shall not go.
Hamlet: My fate cries out
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I call'd.—Unhand me gentlemen,
By heaven I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.
I say away! Go on; I'll follow thee.
Horatio: He waxes *desperate with imagination.*

Now herein several features are to be noted. First, the wild emotion that seizes his soul when he is overcome by his admiration of the ghost. The weird fascination, the uncanny ambition of venture all in one stake; the mad desire to be with the apparition and take any risk it may offer; are all indications of that state of approaching madness which seizes one when self-hypnotized by one's own imagining or the soul's foreshadowing fate. But, second, Shakespeare does not leave this for us to surmise for ourselves. He puts it into the mouth of the most prominent character, other than Hamlet, who is present in the scene. He makes Horatio exclaim: "He waxes desperate with imagination." That word imagination would seem to indicate what was in the mind of Shakespeare as an explanation of the phenomenon. This is especially emphatic considering that Horatio himself witnessed the vision, and felt that it was actual. While he is forced to acknowledge its apparent reality, somehow he cannot rid his mind of the theory that it is not altogether real, but is in some way associated with the mind's imagination. And Horatio's curious assertion is in exact accord with modern psychology.

In recent psycological experimentation the secret of the mind's objective visualization of its subjective states has perhaps been revealed. Says James in his "Psychology," "Meyer's account of his own visual images is very interesting. He says":

" 'With much practice I have suceeded in making it possible for me to call up subjective visual sensations at will. I tried all my experiments by day or at night with *my eyes closed.* At first it was very difficult. In the first experiments that succeeded, the whole picture was luminous, the shadows being given in a somewhat less strong bluish light. I can compare these drawings less to chalk marks made on a blackboard than to drawings made with phosphorus on a dark wall at night. If I wished for example to see a face without intending that of a particular person, I saw the outline of a profile against a dark background. I can now call *before my eyes* almost *any object* which I please, as a *subjective* appearance, and this *in its own natural color and illumination.* Another experiment of mine was when I thought I saw a silver stirrup, and after I had looked at it awhile, I opened my eyes and for a long while afterwards saw its after-image.' "

I cite these experiments merely to show what

modern science has learned of the objective powers of the imagination. If what Meyer accomplished could be done in cold blood, and by a sheer exercise of the will, imagine how much more powerful must be the effects when they are genrated by a potent explosion of the feelings, an intense emotional awakening, or a sudden and exciting anticipation of overmastering desire!

At this juncture, however, a serious problem may present itself to the mind of the thoughtful reader. It would appear to be within the range of natural law that the apparition of a departed human being might be telepathically communicated to a single person, and it would be natural to suppose that such person would regard the vision as objective. But how, it may be enquired, shall we account, on the basis of telepathy, for the dual or triple simultaneous appearance of such a phenomenon—where, in other words, several persons simultaneously detect the same apparition? Can this be explained by any of the known laws of telepathy? Can it be said for instance that the alleged imaginative form of the father of Hamlet could have so vividly impressed the mind of the son that through his own imagi-

nation he could impart the same vision to several others at the same time?

The generally accepted theory of telepathy is that one may hold in his subjective mind a certain image which, while wholly unconscious to one's self, may be discerned by another possessing mediumistic powers, or may be so impressed upon another as to appear to him like an external object. But ordinarily it is not supposed that one's unconscious imagination may so obtrude itself upon another or several others as to objectivize its visions to them, making them discern as an apparently real object that which exists in one's own mind but as an unconscious experience.

Recent experiments, however, have materially revised this former opinion. It is now known that the subconscious or subjective imagination is so powerful and unique that it may not only project its visions on several others simultaneously, but that such projection may occur some time after the event, which gave rise to the subconscious experience, has taken place. For instance, if one should die in much pain and far from any possible human assistance, the serious longing of the sufferer in the moment of death might enter the

mind of a friend or relative unconsciously, and after an extended interval might suddenly rise to the surface of consciousness, and in doing so might also simultaneously rise to the consciousness of another sympathetic mind. In other words, the apparition of a departed person may be conjured by the unconscious mind in such shape that the conscious mind may discern it as an apparently objective experience; or the impression made upon the subconscious mind of an individual may not rise to his own consciousness, but may affect the consciousness of another so that the latter will think that what he sees is an external object,—or it may affect several at the same or at different times in the same manner.

The fact that the vision was not seen for several months after the death of the person comes under the heading in modern parlance of "deferred percipience." That is, the impression made upon the unconscious mind does not immediately rise to the plane of percipient consciousness, but requires some time to break through, as it were, the crust of customary and conventional experience. On this point Mr. F. W. H. Meyers, the distinguished authority on telepathy says:

"We find in the case of phantasms corresponding to some accident or crisis which befalls a living friend, that there seems often to be a latent period before the phantasm becomes definite or externalized to the percipient's eye or ear. . . . It is quite possible that a deferrment of this kind may sometimes intervene between the moment of death and the phantasmal announcement thereof to a distant friend."

Thus we see the fact that the apparition did not appear to Hamlet for some long time after the murderous taking off of his father does not remove it from the form of a possible telepathic experience. Perhaps there are not yet found in modern experiments the proof of the apparition appearing many months after the decease (if dead) or the crisis (if living), but it is apparent that if the percipiency of the telepathic communication may be deferred for any time, the period of such deferrment cannot arbitrarily be determined. Thus the late return of the ghost of Hamlet's father would not throw the explanation of the phenomenon beyond the plain of a pure telepathic experience. In this regard, therefore, we find the great dramatist in possible harmony

with a science discovered centuries after his existence.

The fact that most impresses me is that our author living in an age when the belief in ghosts and apparitions was common and most popular should have introduced the doubts of a philosopher, who rests such doubts on laws whose existence could then have been but vaguely surmised and which have been brought to the light only in recent years. True, these laws are not yet certainly known and our own conclusions concerning them are necessarily tentative; nevertheless, the fact that they could have been foreseen, however dim and imperfectly, so many centuries ago, comes to me as a forcible feature of the surpassing genius of Shakespeare. He introduces the ghost naturally for purposes of dramatic interest. But as he makes of Hamlet a most thoughtful and philosophic character he refuses to permit him to fall in with the common belief and superstition of his time. The manner however in which he evidences his skepticism, his intimation of a knowledge of certain arcane forces in nature, and his startling hint of a psychological science which only the most far seeing could pos-

sibly anticipate, places Hamlet not only centuries ahead of his own age, but even of the age of Shakespeare. It is to this point that I desire to call especial attention.

This, then, is my interpretation of the use which Shakespeare makes of the ghost in the drama of Hamlet. It is a profound psychological phenomenon, and I cannot but marvel that he seemed so far to foresee the discoveries of science as to have anticipated them by three centuries or more. Of course it would be extravagant to insist that Shakespeare was wholly conscious of these laws; but that he somewhat divined them, howbeit dimly, it seems to me can scarcely be questioned in the light of a careful analysis of the psychological phases of the scenes he introduces in this matchless tragedy. Well does he make Hamlet exclaim to his friend, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio." Again in his tempestuous outburst after the ghost has warned him and vanished, Hamlet shouts:

> "O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
> Shall I couple hell!"

Herein he makes it very evident that he is aware,

as afterwards he indicates more plainly, that what he saw might be an apparition of hell, that is, a delusion and hence untrustworthy. He says that the devil is very potent with those who are melancholy and suffering with mental weaknesses, and makes them think that the figments of their minds are external realities.

Here, then, I leave a partial study of one phase of Shakespeare's genius which it seems to me has been but too slightly regarded. If I have made some suggestions that will be pursued by those who are more capable and shall have opened up an original avenue of investigation into the profound depths of this master mind, I shall perhaps have performed a slight service in this commendable labor. Thus much we know, Shakespeare's genius is so vast and comprehensive we can never tell on what far shore of thought or discovery we may meet with him; but whether or not he has anticipated us, we are quite often aware that he has hinted or forestalled the way, so that by observing his guide boards the path of knowledge may be more easily found and the goal attained.

II

HAMLET'S MENTAL TRANSFORMATION

HAMLET'S MENTAL TRANSFORMATION

TO me one of the most important advantages derived from the study of Shakespeare is his revelation of human nature. Rightly understood I believe that he reveals a knowledge of the mind in its infinite ramifications through human character that is not approached by any other author. To him a knowledge of life seemed to come intuitively; it called apparently for but little conscious effort on his part to create exteriorly the well defined character that lay so clearly in his mind. He seemed but to think the character and instantly his magic pen portrayed it. For by the thinking he seemed to become the thing he thought. As he himself says on the lips of Hamlet, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." So it seemed to be with the characters which came to his mind; for, on the instant of their conception they seemed to grow into life and maturity by a natural and uninterrupted process of thought.

And I believe herein lies the source of all the marvel and majesty of his genius. His characters become as actual to him as he himself;

indeed for the time being they are himself, and while they occupy his consciousness he knows himself as none other than what they are. Therefore he discerns the very workings of their minds, the emotions of their hearts, the trend of their development, the seed-time and decay of their organic functions. For he becomes not only the character he conceives, but also its analyst, its student, its psychological investigator, and its philosophical contemplator. He unravels for us as it were the complete tangle and confusion of the feelings, thoughts, sentiments, aspirations and ambitions, the loves and hatreds, the very breathings of the brain and tremblings of the nerves, of each materialization of his mind. Hence I think we should make it our chiefest effort in studying the Master to ferret out his meaning, to discern the rationale of the drama, its motif, and the psychological embodiment of each character, from Shakespeare's point of view alone, and not from what point of view we might prefer. It should be our desire to learn how the creator of these characters conceived and viewed them; what interpretation he himself placed on them, and to hold in our mind's eye as far as pos-

sible, the actual personage he himself portrayed. At least it seems to me this is the only way to study Shakespeare as a genius; if that be our ambition.

But if our ambition be rather to struggle with the framework of a character which the author has given us, and then with this framework to build around it such flesh and blood, such emotions and thoughts as may suit our purpose or temperament, then we are not studying Shakespeare, but we are studying ourselves in Shakespeare. By this process perhaps we may find out what manner of man we are, but we discern less of Shakespeare as we observe more of ourself. In short, for purposes of Shakespearean knowledge, I regard the usual emendations by scholars and actors, as but of little value to the serious student of the author himself. If we are to know the Richard of Shakespeare we must take him with all his native repulsiveness and refined barbarism, just as he is painted. If he is not as such suited to our taste, then we may eschew him as a whole without doing offence to his literary creator; but if we determine to appropriate the substance of this Richard, as the author has

created him, and then to clothe him with our own temperament and sentimentalism, sloughing off where we will and padding as we choose, we are passing off for Shakespeare what is not his own, and purloining his genius to exalt our inferiority.

So with Hamlet. Now there have been numerous Hamlets which the stage has presented from Garrick and Betterton to Booth and the moderns. All of these Hamlets have been distinct—in one way or another differentiated. Yet they have passed as Shakespeare's Hamlet, although so far apart. Whether baldly insane as the Hamlets of Macready, Forrest and the traditional actors, or merely on the border land between insanity and sanity as Booth's and Irving's Hamlet, or, as in the twentieth century Hamlet, ever normal and healthful in mind, but purposely feigning insanity to intrigue against the king and thereby achieve the vengeance on which the Ghost has set him; will all depend upon the temperament of the interpretor and his philosophical bent of mind. From the mere text itself any or all of these interpretations are logical and legitimate. Therefore none can be accused of violating the purpose or spirit of the author by producing a melancholy Hamlet of either of the types above described.

But it seems to me it is going beyond legitimate interpretation and construction, for one to entertain a certain interpretation of the character of Hamlet and then so modify the text—cutting out the scenes and speeches that are incongruous with such an interpretation—as to make the modified text conform with the interpretation. If Hamlet is conceived as a rarely refined and courteous gentleman, from whose lips could never fall even the hint of vulgarity and whose heart is so tender it is incapable of abuse; then there are passages—such as his speeches to Ophelia when his frenzy flares to its highest pitch—in the almost grotesque scene where he leaps into the grave and struggles with Laertes in proof of his wild protestations of love for the "fair Ophelia"—that seem to contradict the uniform courteousness of his demeanor and gentleness of heart. To strike out these passages in order to permit nothing incongruous to appear that would destroy the perfect portrayal of the character as conceived, may be good art, but it is not justice to Shakespeare and certainly violative of his text.

In short we are not permitted in any legitimate intepretation of this character to force our own

ideas into the readings of the play to such an extent as to modify the text merely for the purpose of saving the harmony of the interpretation we may conceive. The character of the Shakespearean Hamlet must be read from the text, not from the temperamental quality of the interpreting actor. This done, then the temperament of the actor may justifiably so play with the text by way of interpretation and inflection, gesture and intonation as will best set forth his conception. What is enjoined upon us as students of Shakespeare, however, is to decipher the actual character which he seemed to have in mind. And that is no easy task when we would study the character of Hamlet.

First then in our effort to compass this labor we would ask what seems to be the main-spring— so to speak— in Hamlet's character around which all the structure apparently is woven and that ever stirs the wheels of action? He is called the melancholy Dane, and not unjustly. From the first appearance in the play to the closing tragic scene he is most downcast, sad and disconsolate. He scarcely suffers a smile to break on his countenance save in way of irony and but laughs

hysterically and without enjoyment. When he strives to be light and gay he but plays with the effort, and effort indeed it is. There is not a moment when this "gloomy mantle" fails him, whether in his secret meetings with Ophelia, or with his scholarly, soldier friends, or with his fellows at court who are set to spy on him, or with the wearisome old fool who fatigues him with his tedious platitudes, or even while alone and unseen of the world, when he laughs with genuine sincerity or smiles in idle pleasure. A cloud constantly covers his brow, a veil screens his vision, he lives in an unseen world, he beholds things that the common eyes of men see not, and which but harrow and distress him. What is worse, he loves this state of mind and instead of seeking to correct it, he but cultivates and encourages it. His mind is so thoroughly colored with the murky tints of melancholy that he prefers its gloomy atmosphere to that of sunset splendors or orient dawns. It is this disposition of Hamlet that comes to constitute the very core of his character, which finally directs his actions and spurs him to his tragic fate.

We should study this melancholic phase of his

character patiently, for in this I think we shall discover the key that will unlock the mystery that has always hovered round the mind of Hamlet, and perhaps enable us to solve the problem of his sanity.

Melancholy has a double and apparently contradictory effect. It at once deadens the feelings and excites the thoughts. Nothing is so conducive to keen penetration and brilliant imagination as the inspiration of melancholy. This is demonstrated by the fact that most all poetic artists have the imaginative faculty developed to a high degree Burton in his quaint and classic work reminds us that "melancholy advances man's conceits more than any humor whatever." Furnished then with this mental accompaniment it is natural that Hamlet should have preferred always to be alone, to nurse his feelings, to see only what his mind's eye and the profound meditations of his soul would conjure for him. It is natural that he should live in dreams, fancies and hallucinations. It is also natural that having once seen these fancies and hallucinations he should seek to cultivate their presence and court their blessing. As Burton describes the man of melancholy so

quaintly, yet so true, I quote him here to illustrate Hamlet's state of mind.

"When I go musing all alone,
Thinking of divers things foreknown;
When I build castles in the air,
Void of sorrow, void of care,
Pleasing myself with phantasies sweet,
Methinks the time runs very fleet;
All my joys to this are folly;
Naught so sweet as melancholy."

"I'll not change life with any King;
I vanished am; can the world bring
More joy than still to laugh and smile,
As time in pleasant toys beguile?
Do not, O do not, trouble me.
So sweet content I feel and see;
All my joys to this are folly;
None so divine as melancholy."

Hence we will note that each time Hamlet is approached by his fellows he is inclined to slight and avoid them, save only his one bosom friend, Horatio, in whom he implicitly confides. While he entertains Rosencrans and Gilderstern, he does so in a gingerly and condescending manner, keenly feeling their unfriendliness and suspicion.

He evinces no delight or joyous spirit at their approach and in the conversation which ensues in Act second of the play he merely parries with them, cutting with such keen repartee and insinuation that he has much difficulty to veil his insincerity. But even in this conversation, which invites to lightsomeness and gaiety he cannot conceal his downcast spirit, and pleads it as an excuse for his want of rationality. Rosencrans playfully taunts him with ambition, because Hamlet had said that Denmark was a prison to his thinking. But Hamlet responds "O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams." Here Hamlet although at play cannot but expose the gloom of his real mental state and the ever present melancholia that haunts him. His bad dreams are the consequence of that state of mind that broods on things of evil report, on griefs, on worries that are but shadows taken for substantial causes. He closes the conversation, which was rapidly rising into a high degree of mental exercise, with the curt remark, "Shall we to the court? for, my fay, I cannot reason."

He is so much depressed, so much annoyed by

their presence, preferring so much to be alone, that he cannot enjoy the exchange of thoughts, and hence becomes almost discourteous to his friends. At last suddenly breaking forth from his crust of insincerity and devious insinuations he speaks to them openly, charging them with the mission of having been sent to watch on and detect him, and after receiving their admission that it is true, he speaks as man to man and lays bare all the sallowness and grim complexion of his soul. "I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave, o'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why it appears to me no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours."

Thus we notice that Hamlet refuses to accept any favorable opportunity to cast aside his garb of gloom and enjoy a moment of merriment and delight. He hugs his grief; he pets his pain. He tells no one of his deep secret, except his most heart-near friend, but buries it within the tomb

of his bosom, and rears hard by the stone of memory, that he may ever sit beside it, to think and groan and despair. We might ask if this is natural; if the author has correctly portrayed the mental condition of one who swoons in melancholy—so much engrossed within himself that he can see naught else in all the world. Would not such a person be rather so self-engrossed that he would be shy of his feelings, and in place of vulgarly exposing them seek the rather to conceal and disguise them?

A melancholy person is always hypersensitive. Such people naturally hesitate to lift the veil from the secret avenues of the heart and expose the true condition of their inward parts. They feel that they are so different from others, that they can but groan when others laugh and weep when others smile, that they would ensconce themselves if possible and ever avoid public notice. Hence their pleasure with solitude and their utter annoyance from the intrusion of others. While this is true, it is however more especially true of those melancholy persons who are distinguished as subjects of hysteria than those who while sad and crestfallen are still strong nerved and pos-

sessed of mental force. The hysteric is self-contained, secretive and deceptive. But the victim of pure intellectual melancholy does not seem to be overcome with such artificial and inhuman feelings; he, however, annoyed by the intrusion of others, is not averse to descanting on his feelings, but rather enjoys society if it will admit of such boresome and self-satisfying conversation. Hence as Dr. Bucknill truly says, "Hamlet is not slow to confess his melancholy, and, indeed, it is the peculiarity of this mental state, that those suffering from it seldom or never attempt to conceal it. A man will conceal his delusions, will deny and veil the excitement of mania, but the melancholiac is almost always readily confidential on the subject of his feelings. In this he resembles the hypochondriac, though perhaps not from the same motive. The hypochondiac seeks for sympathy and pity; the melancholiac frequently admits others to the sight of his mental wretchedness from mere despair of relief and contempt for pity."

We have here a capable medical authority for the correctness of the picture of intellectual sadness, or melancholia, drawn for us by the master-

artist of all time. Hamlet indeed is prodigal of introspective speculations and quite as freely dilates on them in the presence of others as when alone. Indeed his only annoyance when with others seems to be when they are uncongenial to his mood of thought or seek to divert his attention from himself.

Thus we notice how indifferently he indulges the conversation with Guilderstern and Rosencrantz, until the moment arrives when he might descant on his own wretchedness. Then suddenly he rouses himself from demure disinterestedness, and becomes animate and serious. But so soon as the conversation again wanders into mere abstractions upon general subjects which are not immediately relevant to his wonted state of mind, he cuts it short and intimates that they would best hasten to court.

But Rosencrantz suddenly takes him off his guard and pricks his attention by intimating that some players in whom he once delighted were now strolling in their vicinity and would soon be present. His interest is, however, but indifferently aroused. For he retorts with bantering sarcasm, the chief force of which lies in the fact that his

CHARLES KEMBLE AS HAMLET

Alas! poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio.
Act V, Sc. I.

words contain a half-concealed intimation of the great grief and hatred that are ever warring against his reason and his peace of mind.

When he wantonly exclaims "He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me; the aventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis;"etc., it seems clear to me that he slyly reveals the thoughts that are in his mind about the king, his uncle, who now reigns, on whom the ghost has sent him to work his vengeance. For, we learn a little later in the conversation that a certain inhibition has been put by the King's proclamation upon the actors, preventing them from acting in the theatres as they were formerly wont to. Hamlet asks Rosencrantz why the actors are now travelling, or strolling, and says it would be better both for their reputation and their purses if they would abide in one place. To which Rosencrantz replies: "I think their inhibition comes by reason of the late innovations." That is (for the text is here probably inverted and we should read that the innovation is the result of a recent inhibition) the King and parliament, because of the abusive criticism and ridicule to which they had been put

in the popular play-houses had inhibited all the players from performing in the cities or at fixed places; so they were compelled to wander and play where they could be heard.

Hamlet, hearing this, implies, by what he says, that he will only too gladly welcome the one who plays the king and shall pay him tribute. Meaning, undoubtedly, in the light of the events of the day, that the actor playing the role of the king will perchance bring his reigning uncle into ridicule or make him the victim of abuse, which would afford Hamlet his heart's delight in his present frame of mind.

No subject of conversation apparently can arise that he will not turn upon himself, and address himself to, only so long as he can make it subservient to his ambition.

When at length he seems really to experience serious interest in the players after they enter and he discovers among them some old friends, it is only that he may ask them to recite some verses, which are so manifestly a reflection of the deep thoughts that lie secretly in his own mind, as to fit them illy in the drama, if otherwise construed. The verses recite how Pyrrhus sought

out the aged Priam to avenge the crime of his "lord's murther." When Pyrrrus meets at last with Priam in the midst of the flame and blood of the field he lifts high his sword about to strike off his ear, but pauses as if paralyzed, with his sword suspended mid-air. Then after Pyrrhus recovers his senses, "aroused vengeance sets new a-work, and never did the Cyclop's hammer fall with less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword now falls on Priam."

Who but can see in this allegorical speech, Hamlet's own mental reflections and vengeful ambitions? Who is there that cannot here also discern the hesitant state of his mind, knowing well that it is most difficult for him to act even when a favorable opportunity presents itself? How well the verses work out his own "bad dreams," wherein he sees himself, after the first palsy of fear has been o'ermasterd, roused with vengeance to work anew and at last letting the fatal blow fall that shall end the life of the king, his uncle, and avenge his noble "lord's, his father's murther!"

We shall be able the better to understand the state, and serious affliction, of Hamlet's mind, if

we observe how gradually his interest increases as he listens to the curious verses spoken so well by the actor, refusing to allow any interruption, and bluntly insulting the premier, Polonius, who attempts it. Evidently some idea is germinating in his mind. He has suddenly become inspired with some thought that makes him appear more natural and normal than since his first introduction in the play. What is it? What has the actor said that should so suddenly arouse his undisguised and earnest interest? Up to this time he has been but playing with them all; bandying words and repartees; cutting them with the keen stiletto of his wit; staunching their wounds with gentle reminders of his mental irresponsibility. But now something has entered his mind that causes him to quiver from head to foot; waves of heat run rapidly through his frame. He is all excitement. He commends the actors to Polonius and asks him to care for them in good estate.

"My lord, I will use them according to their deserts," replies the old gentleman. Hamlet retorts with extraordinary animation, "God's bodykins! Use every man after his deserts and who should escape whipping? Use them after your

own honor and dignity." That is, he wishes them to be royally entertained and to receive the best the court can afford. What has caused him to become engrossed so suddenly in these strolling actors that inspires him to bestow on them all the princely favors of his power? He dismisses them all, save one. Him, he hastily intercepts and asks with much animation, "Dost thou hear me, old friend; canst thou play the murder of Gonzago?" Hearing that he can and will, Hamlet becomes almost hysterical with delight and cries out, "We'll ha't to-morrow night." But first he asks the privilege of inserting fifteen or sixteen lines. The whole plan is suddenly concocted in his mind as a maddening inspiration, and he is all too eager once again to be alone and contemplate the results.

Throughout this entire scene we have felt that Hamlet has been bored by everybody, by his old friends Guilderstern and Rosencrantz, infinitely bored by the tedious old fool, Polonius, and bored but little less by the clever and interesting actors, until, as by a sudden stroke of lightning, his mind is made to whirl and grow dizzy by an instantaneous thought that smites it. Now he is

ready to live again for there is something to live for and he shall yet taste the sweets of holy vengeance. But we see how speedily he returns to his much caressed and ever welcome melancholy so soon as he is free from the embarrassment of others.

They have all gone. With a sigh, he turns and exclaims "Now I am alone." As much as to say, "At last this horrible boredom has vanished and I am with the only company I can endure—myself and my sweet melancholy." It is this melancholy that ever comforts him with false and illusive blessings when all the world seems stale, flat and unprofitable; it is this melacholy that ever cries "Heed only me and list not to the caution or advice of others. My will is supreme for you; abide with me; do as I command and the purpose of your life shall be fulfilled, the triumph of your ambition attained." And, as all melancholiacs are wont to do, he refuses to heed aught but the grim and moody messenger of evil. It leads him on step by step to the final and fatal deed—the culmination of the gruesome Ghost's command, but not also without its violation; for the Ghost adjured him not to injure or cause the

physical injury of his mother, but to let the serpents in her own mind sting her to misery.

However in the vengeful deed to which phrenetic melancholy dragged him, not only did he compass the death of the king, his uncle, but also that of his mother as well as of himself. Once the evil deed loomed on his vision as the one only noble and purposeful motive of his life; once by constant nursing, the demon of vengeance rose so high in his being as to become his master—all other deeds of evil, all other impulses of wrong gain an audacious mastery, and sway him to their purpose. Thus with apparent ease he slays the deep and sacred love for the fair Ophelia that once thrived in his breast; he slays with but little compunction the unfortunate old man that hid behind the arras; and he would with as little compunction have slain the obstreperous Laertes in the grave of his sister if Providence had not otherwise ordained.

Once brooding melancholy sits like a grim spectre on the throne of the brain, it concocts but evil passions, mental monsters, and vain conceits that delude the heart and lead to murder or self-slaughter—to fathomless misery or irremediable insanity.

Thus does our hero tread step by step the fatal path, led on by every fortuitous circumstance that melancholy can conjure, repugnant to every invitation that would lead him back to reason and to peace. Now that all are gone and he is again alone, save for his melancholy, he instantly whips himself into a passion of self abuse and brutal chiding. He has beheld the actors worked up to tears and consuming passion by a figment of the brain, a mere phantasmagoria of words, in which no human interest is involved, no earthly character disported, while he, "a dull and muddy-mettled rascal, unpregnant of his cause, can say nothing." Fiercer and fiercer his words become, set on fire by the conflagration of his burning soul. "Am I a coward? Who calls me villain? Plucks off my beard? Tweaks me by the nose? 'Swounds! I would take it; for it cannot be but I am pigeon-livered and lack gall to make oppression bitter," he shouts to himself, tearing his hair and beating his breast.

Deeper grows the passion; more intense and cutting his self-chiding. "Why what an ass I am! Fie upon it! Foh! About my brain!" That is, there has been waste enough of time and op-

portunity. Now old brain to your work; concoct some scheme that will inspire and achieve. Then comes the clear conception of the plot through his muddy brain, his intent grows strong and vivid, he beholds the victory already in hand. "I have heard," with animating emotion he ruminates—"that guilty creatures sitting at play, have by the very cunning of the scene, been struck so to the soul that presently they have proclaimed their malefactions." Ay! there's the scheme! Now he has it. At last he has found the plan whereby he may convict the king of his own guilt without placing his absolute reliance upon the uncertain ghost which he knows not yet may be other than but a figment of the brain.

He cannot but urge upon his thoughtful, however dilatory, mind, that the thing he has beheld may be the devil. He is all too conscious of the deep dolefulness and depression of his spirit, and sufficiently intelligent to know that in such a state of mind there is gross danger of deception from the illusionments of hallucination. Therefore he still feels, notwithstanding he is inwardly convinced that his uncle is the murderer, that he must have more ocular proof than what a flitting phan-

tom may afford. Hence what joy seizes him when at length he believes he has struck on a scheme that will reveal the unvarnished truth, which when known will nerve him to his deed so that as the bleeding sword of Pyrrhus fell on the quivering frame of Priam, he shall be nerved to let fall on the breast of the king his swift-swung and hungry sword of vengeance.

This henceforth is his highest ambition: the only purpose and motive of his life. All else is absorbed and forgotten in this. Thus has the brooding "weakness" conquered him, smothering his intellect, violating his reason, hardening his affections, darkening his soul. There is but one thing now to live for. To catch the king by the proof of the play and then to slay him as he would a rat.

Such is the work of Melancholy—such the gruesome effect of nursing a disease of the spirit that thought alone engenders and thought alone can remove. He who would be sorrowful can easily conjure such doleful monsters to his side as shall o'ershadow all the sunlight and the splendor of the world with one universal and portentous cloud. Of no other disease so much as this

are Plato's wise words true. "The body's mischiefs," says he, "proceed from the soul; and if the mind be not first satisfied, the body can never be cured."

Erudite as was Hamlet, and deeply bent on philosophy, this simple law he had never learned, or if he had, he stubbornly refused to put it into practice. There is but one cure for the weakness of melancholy, and that is the cure of mind. No medicine can "minister to a mind diseased; or pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow." Macbeth despaired of medicine and cried to his doctor to throw physic to the dogs. Macbeth was right, but like Hamlet, he too, had apparently not learned that a disease of the mind, though unamenable to medicine, is subject to the ministrations of a physician more subtle, sane and sensible. If the mind is cast in the morbid mould of sorrow, grief and pain; melt the mould and cast it once again in the frame of joy, merriment and hope. If thy thoughts lead thee to evil propensities, to passions base and vicious, conjure others by the magic power of the mind that shall guide thee to virtue, purity and peace.

The mind is both the monitor and mentor of

the soul; leading it to grief and gloom or gladness and delight, as it is affected by the thoughts that flit athwart it. This Hamlet did no know, or if he did, cared not to heed it. The voice of the spirit had come in the very nick of time, when he was already afflicted with grief at his father's death and shame at his mother's untimely marriage; and however deeply it plunged him in grief and woe, the more would he yearn for and hunger after the medium that brought him to this state. That is the Hamlet which the master artist so strongly and so faithfully portrays; true in every iota, faultless as well in science as philosophy, in psychology as in art. Melancholy was indeed to him the never failing nurse of vengeance, which at last he consummated, but not without deep inroads into his mental poise and physical stability—not without such shattering of his intellect as brought him to the very verge of insanity, if indeed it did not hurl him headlong down the beetling precipice.

III

MEDITATIONS ON SUICIDE

A STUDY IN HALLUCINATIONS

MEDITATIONS ON SUICIDE

IN our study thus far, of Shakespeare's drama, we have reached the stage in the unfoldment of Hamlet's character that reveals the deplorable plight of his mental condition.

Deeper and thicker the clouds are darkening about his mind. Gloomier grows every outlook. The guide posts point not elsewhere than to despair, and he conceives no other end than death to all, himself included. "O that the everlasting had not fixed his canon 'gainst self slaughter," he cries prophetically, already perceiving in his soul the intimations of the dread finale of his fate. And yet his native buoyancy would, if left unhindered, perhaps neutralize the grim effect of his melancholy. He himself seems to feel so, and seizes every opportunity to nurse and enhance his gloomy disposition.

The entire soliloquy at the close of the second act is an evidently arduous and painful effort to goad his vengeful purpose, and to encourage it by gathering round his mind the gloomiest and most foreboding visions he can conjure. He seems to feel that he will fail when brought to the

verge of action. Remembering that his own mind is so constantly depressed and enangered because of his dilatoriness and irresistible hesitancy, we may well understand that the vision, which appears to him when he is closeted at last alone with his mother, was the figment of his brain, conjured by his half-diseased imagination. He is in the midst of a fierce diatribe against his uncle, shouting

> "a vice of kings;
> That from the shelf a precious diadem stole
> And put it in his pocket.
> A King of shreds and patches;"

when suddenly the ghost appears, saying

> "Do not forget; this visitation
> Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose."

What else can this mean but that Hamlet realized despite his fierce words against the king, that he still felt himself to be a hesitant coward, in that the king, against whom he so rashly raved, still breathed the breath of life? "Why," he must have reasoned in the secret meditations of his soul, "am I so brash with words, but so wanting in action? Why, if I can to my mother break

EDWIN FORREST AS HAMLET

To be or not to be; that is the question.

Act III, Sc. I.

all the bounds of filial courtesy, and mercilessly chide her for marrying that treacherous, lecherous villain, can I not spur myself to thrust the weapon through him, and thus fulfil the call to vengeance to which both heaven and hell invite?"

Such must have been the thoughts that were wandering through his brain when the Ghost appears. His mother cries, " 'tis ecstacy: the very coinage of your brain," to which charge he makes a feeble reply by insisting that if put to the test he can repeat the words he has just spoken. But all the while it is very apparent that he is but spurring himself on to a deed from which his nature revolts, and in which he shall succeed only if he drowns his soul deep enough in melancholy, pessimism and despair.

He loses no occasion to evoke what agony he can from every circumstance. When he witnesses the warring forces of Fortinbras, he thinks not of their glory or achievements, but merely finds in them a theme for his own consolation,—an invitation to profounder depths of foreboding, gloom and wretchedness.

Realizing that war means blood, and mutual assassination, he studies it only for such symbols as

goad him on to bloody deeds and thoughts. "Examples gross as earth exhort me," now he cries. "How stand I, then, that have a father killed, a mother stained; excitements of my reason and my blood, and let all sleep, whilst twenty thousand men go to their graves, for a phantasy and trick of fame," he coldly meditates, descending to lower depths of agony, fuliginous avenues of gloom. It is evident he is seized by one thought only, that of vengeance, and he must needs nurse it into constant life by the fruitful presence of unabated melancholy. If for a moment this sullen nurse desert him, his native spirit of gaiety and dalliance leaps forth to conquer. At such moments some vision of the mind arises that quells all his fanciful emotions, and drags him to Cimmerian depths of darkness.

Never was a mind so natively gay, so studiedly wretched and demure. Never did a heart in which so naturally leaped the fountain of love and tenderness become so stained by the self-determining venom of ambition and vengeance, as in this mind-begloomed and ill-fated Hamlet.

However beautiful and bright the world may appear he sees in it nothing but a barren prom-

ontory, an unweeded garden, in which things rank and gross offend the sense. A storm cloud overhangs the golden fretted canopy of the skies hiding from his soul all their splendor, glory and illusionment. His mind is a charnel house in which prowl but things uncanny and ghoulish, conjured from the deep hells of his being, where sit the gods of hatred, bitterness and death. Nothing invites him to peace; all harries and distorts with monstrous forebodings and ill-omened prophecies. His whole life, all his ambition, his wit, his cunning and deep erudition, are now swallowed up in one dizzying, bewildering dream of horror: "O from this time forth my thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth" he groans; forseeing that the shedding of blood alone will quiet the demons that tear his breast and madden his brain.

That one so wholly overwhelmed by a sea of troubles should pray for escape through death is but natural. One who possessed the spirit of physical venturesomness might under such conditions seek an opportunity to engage in war, or in scenes of wild excitement and invited danger. Were he given less to contemplation and more to action he would rejoice when he heard the call to duty that would remove him from his depths of gloom.

Not so our Hamlet.

When the king concludes it is best for his own safety and that of the Court that Hamlet accept the office of ambassador to England, the proposition received Hamlet's disapproval. When he meets the forces of Fortinbras, with whose mission his spirit is in entire sympathy, instead of cheerfully enlisting, and hastening to the field of action that he may bury his sorrow in pursuit of "battles, sieges, fortunes," he merely studies them at a distance and philosophises on the promptings that spur men to deeds of blood. The death which he might encounter on battle fields seems to present to his foreboding mind no fascination; but the death which a "bare bodkin" might vouchsafe him seems to lure him with the charm of agony. If he meet an untimely death it must be the work of his own hand. For by such a death he would be able to perceive and comprehend his own cowardice and failure.

Intensely honest and keenly introspective, he sees and confesses that the only reason which decides him against self-slaughter is the "dread of something after death," the dread of a dream that might arise in that sleep of death that would

give him pause. If he suffered death to o'ertake him in the bloody waltz of the battle field, he knew that he would half lie to himself, by seeming to act through duty and fall by necessity. He knew that such a death would be virtual suicide, yet it would be dishonorable and concealed by a trick of cunning. Above all else he would be honest with himself; therefore if he shall escape suffering through untimely death it must be by such act as he shall consciously and purposely inflict.

In Hamlet, then, we ever behold even in his profoundest depths of gloom the presence and poise of the perfect philosopher. He would be glad to lose his life if he could part with it by an act of God or through an instrumentality uncontrived by himself. When he is abjured by all his friends from following the Ghost lest it lead him to misfortune, he scouts at their warnings, reminding them that he holds his life at less than a "pin's fee." He never acts the coward through physical fear. His hesitancy and cowardice arise alone from mental scruple and philosophical survey.

The state or fate of his body gives him but little concern. It is merely the final fate of his soul that fills him with prophecies of woe. He does not

seem to doubt the existence of his soul or its future continuity; for while he sets his physical life at an pin's fee, of his soul, he says like the Ghost itself it is immortal. Thus in his famous soliloquy on self-slaughter it is the "pale cast of thought" that "sicklies o'er the native hue of resolution." And that pale cast of thought is "the respect that makes calamity of so long life," by causing its endurance through the fear of "flying to other ills we know not of." In short it is the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns that puzzles his will and makes him hesitate in his resolution to seek that sleep that never wakes.

But here we meet with what is an inconsistency in his logic. Why should Hamlet doubt that undiscovered country? Why should he declare that from its bourn no traveller returns? Why should he, who not only believed that his soul existed, but also that it was immortal; who never for a moment questioned the theory of the after life,—still be so puzzled in mind concerning the continuity of his soul's existence if he fled this life? One would imagine that none could receive more palpable and positive proof of future existence,

and its actual state than Hamlet fortunately possessed. He was not forced to accept the ipse dictum of any one; he need not go to church and implicitly obey the instructions of the priest against his reason; he need not turn the pages of the Bible for proof of the future world or description of its condition.

Never, we may well believe, did a human being confront a more convincing proof of the after world than Hamlet. He saw not only an apparition; but one whose presence was as familiar to him as the living form itself. He saw what purported to be the Ghost of his father. More than that, he was permitted to examine it and learn that it answered in minutest detail the full and perfect description of his paternal parent. Not only so, but his several friends also witnessed the same vision, and like him were absolutely convinced of the verisimilitude of the spirit. Nor was this all; for not only "did one rise from the grave" to convince him more than could "Moses and the prophets;" but he was further permitted to hold a private and long-continued conference with this apparition, and thereby satisfy himself by the spirit's own voice, testimony and appearance, that

in all respects, even the smallest, it was the perfect likeness of his father.

Nor was even this the fullness of the evidence. For the spirit spoke to him of the affairs of government, of the court and things known alone in the privacy of the reigning family; of which Hamlet was himself part witness, and the remainder of which was easily corroborated. So that judged by any of the rules of evidence in the courts of justice, one would be forced to render a verdict in favor of the Ghost's complete demonstration of his former existence on earth and his palpable return thereto.

Is it not then surprising, in spite of all these facts, that Hamlet should still insist no traveller had ever returned from the country which to his mind was a terra incognita—a country still undiscovered? What could he mean by this curious declaration—this apparent inconsistency? Hamlet never speaks at random when alone and in possession of his peace of mind. He could not therefore have spoken thoughtlessly when in this gloomiest hour of his life, most seriously he contemplates the fate of suicide.

Never perhaps did he more cautiously measure

his words and weigh his thoughts. He sank a shaft into the profoundest depths of his being and sought all the wells of wisdom he possessed. He hoped for such response as would give him courage and consolation. Instead he hears but responses of despair and voices of foreboding. "Thus conscience doth to make cowards of us all," he cries, at last satisfied that he has been unable to penetrate beyond "this bank and shoal of time" into the infinite vistas of the invisible Beyond. But how can this be? Is Hamlet false to himself, or irrationally wilful; determined to disbelieve all and every proof of the after life, regardless of whatever source may produce it?

It seems to me, that for the time being allowing Hamlet's rationality and sanity of mind, he must either have irreverently and defiantly ignored the most awesome and convincing proof of future existence the human mind can confront; or he must have felt the force of a certain contrary current of reason that caused him to disbelieve or at least doubt the reality of the vision he had beheld.

At this juncture I wish to say that again I seem to find in Shakespeare a most amazing anticipation of modern discovery in scientific psychic

research. The proof of the future life, as I have said, which Hamlet received was in all respects the most complete the human mind could wish. It was as complete and absolute as any ever recorded in history or even ever borne on the lips of rumor. More perfect and satisfying it could not be. The fact then that despite all this convincing demonstration Hamlet still doubted, clearly shows that when Shakespeare brings his most intellectual and philosophical character face to face with the problem of the return to earth of those who once inhabited the human frame, he makes him finally doubt or question it all by the sheer force of reason. He does not manifest his doubt by denying his perception of the apparition; or that it in every manner fully satisfied the most detailed requirements of his father's likeness, or that others had seen it like himself; but he doubts it because he has heard that the devil may so fashion his form as to deceive the most astute and make them believe that what they see is the form of one they once had loved.

Now this unique capacity of the psychic force to so affect the alleged medium that it will compel the latter to commit unconscious perjury, by

swearing to the false appearance of the apparition, is one of the most recent discoveries in this arcane science (if so it may be called). The discovery which has been made in modern psychical research is that the mental hallucination of a psychic-subject may take on specific impersonations of such exactness and true likeness to the real personage, that it is difficult to doubt the actual presence of the departed. But it has also been demonstrated that such hallucinations may be artificially produced, so to speak, by the use of the mental force known as Suggestion. By the mere suggestion of a positive command or persuasion the mind will call up any personage that may be sought. The conjurer causes the subject to behold, as if actually present in material form, whatsoever individual may be desired. Yet there is nothing actually present but the thought of the conjurer and the obedient mind of the subject.*

* As an illustration of the amenability of the subliminal consciousness of a sensitive to respond to the mental suggestion of another I quote an incident from Dr. Maxwell's "Metaphysical Phenomena."

"The following is an experiment in the transmission of thought which Dr. Maxwell tried with the medium.

"I gave my hand to M. Maurice to hold, and said to him —we had been talking in a vague, general manner of the

This recent scientific discovery seems vaguely to suggest itself to the mind of Hamlet. Of course the theory is not worked out by the author, as would not be looked for in the work of a dramatist. But Hamlet seems to know enough of the principle, to feel, intuitively, that what he had seen may not have been the actual spirit of his father, but some false personification, imposed upon him as he says by the devil (the ancient superstition) or as we would say by some strong suggestion (according to modern scientific conclusion). Hamlet's own state of mind was, of course, the strong suggestion. His intense mental suffering because of his father's death, and mother's marriage, put him in just such a mental condition as to make him amenable to such an hallucination as would suggest the presence of his departed father. His bent of mind is so philosophical, the poise of his spirit so contemplative,

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plurality of existences, — 'Try and see how I died in my previous existence.'

Unknown to the medium I wrote down on paper the words: 'Fall from a horse.'

"M. Maurice answered: 'I see your life, then you fade away into nothingness; you die from an accident: a carriage — no, a horse accident. I see you wearing a shield. You fall from your horse, he crushes you to death.'"

that he does not permit himself, as would a weaker personality, to be led completely captive by what he had seen. Notwithstanding all the agony of his soul, and the ineffable solace it must have afforded him once again to have seen his honored parent, the proof of whose presence was apparently so palpable; still he refuses to give it absolute credence or to trust its testimony till he has weighed the facts more carefully, and sought out corroborative evidence that shall make assurance doubly sure.

We shall better understand the philosophical poise of Hamlet's mind if we compare his actions under similar circumstances with those of Macbeth, in that other wonderful psychological drama of Shakespeare. Hamlet is a man of thought and retirement. Macbeth is a man of action and worldly interests. Hamlet is a scholar. Macbeth, a warrior and ruler. Hamlet is sensitive, positive, intuitive, Macbeth is coarse, immobile, dull. Hamlet suffers no individual or circumsance to conquer or control him; he brushes aside confidants, friends, lovers, parents, officers of state and the majestic king himself, if they oppose his purpose. Macbeth is weak, submissive, over-

mastered by the stronger will of his wife, persuaded to the execution of deeds from which he revolts, yet is unable to resist because of the potent influences that sway him. He is credulous, submissive, passive.

We shall now see how the presence of supposed apparitions oppositely affects these two most opposite and perfectly contrasted characters. When the ghost of Banquo confronts Macbeth as he sits at the head of the banquet table in the great hall, instant fright, horror and confusion seize him. He beholds Banquo as he imagined he last saw him; whom the murderers described as "safe in a ditch with twenty trenched gashes on his head; the least a death to nature." Concious of his crime and instinctively a coward, he believes beyond contradiction that the real ghost of Banquo sits in the empty seat placed in honor for him:—"The times have been," he shouts, blanched with horror, "that when the brains of men were out the man would die; and there an end; but now, they rise again, with twenty mortal murthers on their crown, and push us from our stools!" All Lady Macbeth's calm contempt and masculine logic cannot avail in this his hour of

most intense confusion. "This is the very painting of your fear," she insists, and sarcastically insinuates, "This is the air-drawn dagger, which you said, led you to Duncan." But all of no avail. He is sure it is the real Banquo, murdered, returned as an impalpable spirit. "Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer's cloud, without our special wonder," he gasps, seeing that the undisquieted banqueters "can keep the natural ruby of their cheeks, while his are blanched with fear?" None in that vast festival hall beholds the ghost save Macbeth.

But before Hamlet himself beheld the ghost of his father he had already been prepared for its reception by the assurance of his faithful and trustworthy friends that they had truly witnessed it. Nevertheless Hamlet cannot at last persuade himself that it was real or to be obeyed without further assurance. But Macbeth is so readily convinced, despite his temporary doubts, that he stakes his life and fortune on the teaching and guidance of uncanny powers, who employ the witches as their agents, and lead him step by step to final ruin.

Doubtless the chief cause of the different tem-

peramental disposition toward the ghost, between Hamlet and Macbeth, is to be found in the freedom of the one from guilt and the consciousness of "deep damnation" in the other. But it was Hamlet's lofty sensitiveness and intellectual exaltedness which saved him in this parlous time. The revolt of his mind against the onslaught of his emotions was his succorer. Weak people are so easily appalled by what profess to be visitations from the unseen realm, that they suffer not themselves to analyze and apprehend the nature of the vision they behold. Their emotions are their instructors and inspirers and what these command they obey. The multitude who are led astray by spiritistic phenomena are thus the dupes of their feelings, fearing to look beyond what their eyes seem to behold. But Hamlet was determined to study the phenomenon be it "a spirit of health or goblin damned."

And all too well he knew he was in a mental condition to invite such illusions. He knew his "weakness and melancholy" were potent forces wherewith to conjure what might purport to be such spirits as might damn him. For his melancholy was apparnently not constitutional but

EDMUND KEAN AS HAMLET

Unhand me, gentlemen;
By heaven! I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!
ACT I, SC. IV.

brought on by a "sea of troubles," against which he is tempted "to take up arms," yet "lacks the gall to make oppression bitter." The king clearly intimates that since the time of the death of his father, Hamlet is a completely transformed individual, whose ceaseless gloom forebodes ill to all. To Rosencrantz and Guilderstern, he says, when pleading with them for their friendly intercession to learn the secret of Hamlet's disconsolate state, "Something have you heard of Hamlet's transformation; so, I call it; sith not the exterior nor the inward man resembles what it was. What it should be more than his father's death that hath thus put him so much from the understanding of himself, I cannot dream of."

Here then we have the key to the origin of Hamlet's weakness and melancholy. It is not temperamental or congenital with him. It was all brought on, stage by stage, through the sudden and damnable taking off of his honored father. We are not permitted, however, to conclude that it was only the information of the murder of his father gotten from the ghost, that has unsettled his mental calm and caused his weakness. For when he first appears he is already clothed with

the gloomy mantle of woe, and is the cause of his royal mother's worry. But doubtless the information which the ghost had given him turned his head and caused him to realize not only that his natural manners had been altered but the very purpose and necessity of his life. A new motive now is his ruling passion—vengeance. Before, grief o'ermastered him. But now the iron has so entered his veins that his whole being is roused to a deed from which his nature instinctively revolts.

The result is that he wavers between two ways. Whether he shall do what the spirit commanded, kill his uncle, and thus avenge his father, and pacify his soul, or, which is far more to his mental liking, flee a duty so repulsive, and by his own hand sink into the eternal sleep of death, is the problem he alone must solve. Although the apparition of the ghost has smitten him with an appalling sense of duty; although he fully realizes that the king is guilty notwithstanding he requires more ocular proof before he dare to act; still, he feels, despite all the evidence and the call of heaven and hell to action, he would much prefer to end his life by a "bare bodkin" and with it "all the heart ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to."

This is the thought apparently that is conquering his soul when he is closeted with his mother and pouring on her head the hot chastisement of his burning words. He knows, within the deep centre of his being, that however fiercely he is storming at her, he shall at last fail in duty; for he would rather persuade himself that it is nobler in the mind to take up arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them when wrapped in the mantle of eternal sleep. With that thought beclouding his mind the ghost appears again, when closeted with his mother, reminding him that the visitation is merely to whet his almost "blunted purpose." He himself reveals his own feelings when he exclaims to the apparition, "Do you not come your tardy son to chide, that, laps'd in time and passion, lets go by the important acting of your dread command?"

Thus apparently the dream and desire of suicide have so bewitched him that its contemplation had almost blunted his former passion for vengeance on the murderer of his father. Nevertheless, as in all other situations, with him "the pale cast of thought sicklies o'er the native hue of resolution;" for he finds himself quite as in-

capable of selfmurder as of the murder of his uncle. And for the same reason. Because he is so much the scholar, the profound and philosophical thinker, notwithstanding his native skepticism, that he leads himself away from action by pursuing a winding avenue of metaphysical speculation. He would cheerfully welcome death by his own hand if only he knew the sleep were final. But the danger of such dreams, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, as must give us pause, is the cue that leads him safely from the deed.

Yet what dreams could be in the after life that would give *him* pause? He accuses himself of much that is evil; but it is manifestly the declaration of an oversensitive conscience. He says to Ophelia, when he is trying to persuade her that their mating were fatal to them both, "I am myself indifferent honest, yet I could accuse me of such things it were better my mother had not borne me; I am very proud, ambitious, revengeful, with more offences at my back than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape or time to act them in." Yet there is none other who accuses him; nor are we led by the

story of the drama to think of him other than, when normal, as a perfect gentleman with most kindly heart and ennobled soul. Still he declares he has "bad dreams" and he fears that the dreams of the sleep of death might eternally annoy him.

What are those dreams?

Before we study that problem, let us not fail to notice that he seems but little annoyed by the possibility of physical sufferings in the world beyond. He has been nursed in the grim teachings of mediaevalism, when the theology of Anselm and Augustine prevailed. The ghost had reminded him of the tortures to which he himself was subjected. "My hour is almost come when I to sulphurous and tormenting flames must render up myself."

But when thinking of the possible horrors of the coming life such physical severities and sufferings seem far from Hamlet's contemplation. He fears only the dreams. He foresees spiritual and moral horrors, but of physical torment he cares but little. This evidences a most advanced and indifferent mood in one reared in the thoughts of that age. But what are the dreams he fears that seem to give him pause? It occurs to me

that the one abiding "dream" he most fears is the everlasting consciousness that he had refused to perform the duty laid upon him by his murdered father, and that if he leaves this life and fails to execute it his conscience will forever and forever torment and confound him. Does he mean this, or does he mean that he will first execute the deed of murder and then, having satisfied the grim command of his father's ghost, thrust the bare bodkin through his own breast and end the memory of sorrows? Then would he also continue to have bad dreams? Would then the dream of the foul slaughter of another coupled with his own self slaughter so harrow and torment him that he would never find peace in all the future?

We cannot tell from the words of Hamlet what were his inmost thoughts on this grave theme. We may conclude, however, from what he says that he would never be able to forgive himself throughout endless ages for having violated the promise to his father's spirit if he be derelict in duty; that the one vast burden he feels weighing down his life, from which he recoils, yet which he must needs perform, (the murder of his uncle), will haunt him with gruesome memory from which

not all the years beyond the grave will free him. If we take this view then Hamlet reveals to us a sensitively conscientious nature, which would throw some light on his morals and explain to a degree the aggravating dilatoriness and irresolution of his mind. He wishes to obey his father's command, because he is persuaded both that it was his father who commanded him and that the charge against his uncle is true. Yet to do this deed would blacken his soul, because the memory of it would haunt his spirit forever.

Such a conclusion however is hardly in keeping with other traits in his character. For we see in the third act, while closeted alone with his mother, he is suddenly excited by the cry of Polonius for help, and in an instant slays him, yet does not thereafter seriously mourn the deed. Surely if having killed so innocent a man (howbeit a boresome and tedious old fool) gives rise to no compunction in his heart, and indeed apparently affects him no more than "any the most common thing in life," we can but easily imagine that the slaying of one so reprehensible in his eyes as his murderous uncle, would afford him not the slightest shadow of remorse. If ever one, who is

even most delicately sensitive in matters of conscience, might feel himself half-justified in the act of murder it would be this forlorn and woe-bestranded Hamlet. Nay, it cannot be the dread of the smitings of a bitter and chastised conscience that gives him pause. It cannot be that he halts at murder because he fears the everlasting memory of it. There is something else that puzzles his uncertain will.

In my judgment it is nothing more than the general dread of the consequence of death itself, ever common to the race. But this dread was in Hamlet especially keen, because of his extraordinary imagination and penetrating acumen. What was to others but fancy or flitting shadow was to him opaque substance and reality. So introspective was his mind that he could penetrate the deepest fathoms of his being and discern the very waters of his soul traverse their several channels. He could follow the wanderings of his *body* beyond the grave and see it perhaps "imprison'd in the viewless winds, and blown with restless violence round about the pendant world." Nay, he could even feel, what is worse, that his *spirit* would never find a resting place, but stormed and

smitten by unabated and tumultuous forces, which inhabit the vacuous realms of space, would be ever ill at ease, the butt of chance and sport of fortune.

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil!" Ah yes, what dreams! Dreams that may haunt us like everlasting nightmares, which like them we shall be unable to o'ermaster, waiting for the never coming morn; dreams which, mingling memory and prophecy, shall in one instant recall all the evil of our past lives and forecast the consequential horrors that yet await us. Who that knows the irresponsibility of dreams, how they cannot be ordered or controlled, but come and go as the idle wind for good or ill, would willingly cast his fate in such a world where dreams are perennial, and fact is never realised! Who would willingly enter such a wild phantasmagoria of images, conjured by torture, fear and ignorance; who that loves his peace of mind and the pursuit of knowledge, would venture on that "barren promontory," round which the gloom of everlasting shadow gathers and the howling tempests of eternity forever boom! This was the

dread, I take it, "of something after death" that haunted and horrified the mind of Hamlet as it does of all imaginative souls, and gave him pause. Whatever else the after life might be, the very chance of its being but a life of dreams, as unrulable and irrational as our dreams o'night this side of the grave,—this alone, he ponders, was enough to make him sheath his bodkin in a scabbard. After all 'tis better to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of, especially till our appointed time, when we shall all learn the final truth.

Thus whatever else he may be in action or irresolution, in thought and philosophy Hamlet is ever most sane and rational. Though in imagination he points the weapon to his breast to cut out its heart of gloom, his head is balanced and thus far his reason is his rescue. He has learned, what we must all sometimes learn, and what it would perhaps be well for the entire race if it always realised. We cannot better this life by flying from it. We know not that we can better our fate by dashing out our brains and venturing on the fortunes of an undiscovered realm. Hence why should we cast away that which is in

hand, and which we know, for what is unseen and must forever be unknown. Better indeed we endure, lest we fly to what to endure may be a thousand fold more horrible. While here, we know we have at least a chance to win; we may conquer circumstance and finally turn sorrow into joy, tears into laughter. But yonder? Who shall say what fate may pall us? In front of yonder unfrequented bourn forever hangs the curtain of uncertainty. What is behind it none can tell. What actors there strut or grovel on the invisible stage no returning visitors report. Whether there be tragedy or comedy, or the even balance of both, or chronicles of such indescribable suffering as the natural mind can ill-conceive, who shall say? Therefore where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise. The grave is silent. The heavens echo not. Await then thy fate, impatient man, and enter not till the gates are lifted by the hands of time.

IV

THE FATE OF OPHELIA

A STUDY IN INSANITY

THE FATE OF OPHELIA

TO behold the shattered remnants of a once splendid piece of art is a cause for lamentation and regret. Not only does one mourn the loss of the handiwork, (to commune with which may often transport the mind beyond the sodden state of ordinary life), but as well the waste of arduous toil, mental anxiety, and force of accumulated ideals, which the artist utilized in its production. Who, when viewing the ruins of a statue but feels that a life has gone out—a life not of the feelingless marble—but a life which its spiritual creator conjured and breathed into it, for our joy and edification? On reviewing the great canvasses of art, on which are spread in matchless colors the dreams and ideals of the painter, who but feels that each minutest tint reveals the passion of the artist's heart, while the harmonious ensemble is the record of his life compressed into picturesque epitome, symbolical of all his yearnings and ambitions?

When such great masterpieces crumble in dust or evaporate in smoke and flame, what loss is here of such storage of thoughts and dreams, hot tears

and bloody sweat, agonizing hopes and the anguish of despair, as none but geniuses endure, who must needs pay the price of glory in the coin of hardship! He who beholds the ruin of a work of art unaffected—who does not feel his heart-strings bruised, his soul cast down—is still a savage, his mind on a level with the beasts. Imagine if you can a buffoon tearing in shreds a Madonna of Angelo or a Galatæa of Raphael, and would you not feel that you beheld a deed somewhat akin to murder, and your heart sicken and grow weak in sight of the outrage? Instinctively we feel that creation is divine, and to ruin a work of art is to desecrate an altar of divinity.

But if such be our unassuaged emotions in the presence of a ruin of inanimate and voiceless art, what must we feel when we behold the sudden ruination of a human mind, itself the seat of genius, and destined creator of deathless art? How sad it seems that some of the greatest of human minds have ended their feverish days in the illusionment of vacuous insanity. It is difficult to realize that a mind, once potent with thought and creative energy, should like a vacuum become suddenly empty, or filled with but vapory shadows and

glimmering nothings. Where now is the mind, where the brain, of such pathetic ruins of sublime genius!

When we think of geniuses like Nietsche, de Maupassant, Swift and Cowper, as well as many others who could be mentioned, whose intellectual splendor once illumined the world, going out in utter darkness, wrapped in a cloud of mental gloom, it must needs cause us to meditate on the frailty of the human mind, and the utter disappointment that oft the brightest promises of life afford. And yet we do not mourn the loss of genius only (the final vacuity of a brain that once throbbed with the radiance of divine inspiration), but likewise the loss of any degree of reason that once proudly sat on the humblest brain of man.

Who can describe the sensations that o'ertake us when we are brought suddenly to the realization of the shattered mind of one whom we love, whose beauty once enthralled us, whose clear mind and kindly sympathy never failed to befriend us? To look upon the pale and inexpressive brow of such an one, into his glassy, viewless eyes, to hear his lips utter senseless speech, from which once emanated wisdom and sobriety; to hear him con-

jure from the "vasty deep" of his imagination harrowing scenes of horror and frightful forebodings of approaching danger; to witness his utter transformation from the statehood and glory of a god to that of a grovelling beast or the senility of decrepit age; is indeed to cause "tears, seven times salt, to burn out the sense and virtue of one's eyes."

Yet where in all literature shall we discover a more intensely pathetic and overwhelming portraiture of such utter decadence of reason, purity and honor, in an artless and heaven-born maid, than as the master hand has depicted it for us in the beautiful and fair Ophelia? Here was a child as lithe and lissom as a lily, as sweet as a rose-leaf, as pure as the heart of a crystal, as bewitching as a Grecian goddess, suddenly smitten by cruel grief into mental vacuity and moral depravity. She whose breath was ever soft as a vernal zephyr's, whose words were chaste as unsullied snow, whose gaze was winsome and unsuggestive as a fawn's, is suddenly so changed that from those same pure lips now leap ribald songs and insinuating speech, and from those eyes longing looks that are not impelled by thoughts of inno-

cence. O child of ill-begotten love and ill-favoring fortune, what sinister fate was it that smote thee, what gloomy monster of the Invisible o'ermantled and deflowered thee? This shall be our study for a brief period in these pages.

In studying the madness of Ophelia we must not forget that we are investigating an actual case of insanity, portrayed with unfailing accuracy whether viewed from a pathological or a psychological standpoint. Shakespeare is ever so much the artist that he never imposes upon us, for facts or impressions, what afterwards we shall be forced to reject and label as but the vaporings of ignorance. He knows the laws of the human mind, no less than those of the human body, so well, that when he depicts the various possible states of mental transformation, he ever introduces with lucid accuracy the exact points of difference and contra-distinguishment. If, for example, we examine the mental states of Hamlet, Macbeth, Ophelia, and King Lear, all of whom evidence certain stages of mental aberration, we shall find the differences so finely drawn, the mental divergence from normal equilibrium so deftly indicated, that each will easily drop into its appropriate medical classification of insanity.

The causes of human madness are very numerous, and are usually divided into pathological and psychological. Not that these two classifications are to be considered distinct, for they usually conjoin, but that the origin of individual cases can often be traced directly either to some physical disease or to some mental or psychological condition. One can easily see that Lear's madness and that of Ophelia, originating in a psychological cause, rapidly develop into pathological stages of an extreme character. On the contrary, if we are to construe Hamlet and Macbeth as insane, we must conclude that their states of madness, of whatever degree they may be, are almost purely psychological. Hence their intellect and reason are but little affected, for no palpable disease of the brain manifests itself. But in the case of both Ophelia and Lear, although extreme grief in both characters is the immediate cause of their madness, their brains utterly give way and become so diseased that death directly follows.

Dr. Tuke says: "The mental symptoms of acquired insanity have been classified from the time of Pinel as mania, melancholia and dementia, ac-

cording as exaltation or depression of feeling, or weakness of intellect, presents itself most prominently in a given case. To these have been added delusional insanity, spoken of by certain authors as monomonia. However, all such when finally analyzed are reducible to the primitive melancholia, mania and dementia."

That is, the states known as melancholia and mania, arise from the intense alterations of the feelings caused by some exciting stimulus, and are manifested in either extreme depression or extraordinary exaltation. In mania, that is in the state of insanity known as that of the maniac, the subject raves and conceives himself in a condition of indescribable misery brought on by imaginary but to him most real and overpowering causes. His brain is excited to its utmost tension, he suffers with almost constant sleeplessness, and his nervous stability completely shattered.

But the insanity of the hypochondriac or the melancholiac manifests itself in symptoms precisely opposite to these. The subject then experiences most profound and suffocating feelings of depression and both physical and mental gloom; he loses all interest in the ordinary affairs of life,

disregards his friends and former fellows, concentrates his feelings and thoughts exclusively upon himself, and delights in the torture which the aggravation of his emotions of misery create within him.

The state of insanity known as dementia is more directly the result of intellectual aberration, and evidences its symptoms in confusion and irregularity of thought, in the utter dethronement of the rational faculties, and the subject "becomes indifferent to social considerations, apathetic and neglectful of the personal and family duties, evinces dislike and suspicion of friends and relatives, and may betake himself to excess in alcoholic stimulants and other forms of dissipation." The authorities all agree, however, that "intellectual insanity never exists without moral perversion."

It is quite manifest, if we are to accept this classification as authoritative and correct, that the class of the insane under which Ophelia's condition would fall, must be that of melancholia. Hers was distinctly and emphaticaly an aberration of the emotions; her mental dethronement was the direct and undisguised effect of her emotional

misery brought on by domestic and social causes that were sufficient easily to overcome a nature as delicate, sympathetic and tender as was hers.

Her heart, as that of Lear, literally broke, and with it cracked her brain. When we recall that she was a mere child, probably yet in her "teens," who for all we are told had never but one lover and one whom she regarded as "the glass of fashion and the mould of form"; and then remember that this lover not only proved faithless and cruel to her, but became at last the avowed and indifferent murderer of her father; we discover cause enough to shatter the mental equilibrium of one much sturdier, and built on coarser and far more material lines than she.

She is so much in love with Hamlet, although in the play she never openly confesses her love, that when he rebukes and casts her off, she can only sink under the blow, bemoaning her fate, but never chiding or accusing him. "O woe is me to have seen what I have seen; to see what I see," she mournfully wails, fainting at the evidence of his mind distraught, as she thinks, yet regarding him so much a god, she dare not drag him from his lofty pedestal and reprimand him at her feet.

She believes utterly in his nobility of mind, his superior morals, his exalted purpose. He is indeed her god—her ideal. Nothing that he could do would destroy her admiration; were he indeed a god she could not more adore him; were he less than man she could not in imagination lift him to a higher state of honorable manhood than that in which she holds him. Hers is a love unfathomable, whose depths the plummet-line of no intellect could ever sound, and which the shores of the human heart could not confine.

When then this love is unrequited; when this god of all her devotions and confessions, this paragon of perfections, this ideal of manliness and magnanimity, falls from his lofty throne besmeared with the blood of her slain parent; it is nothing marvellous that a heart, which could contain no more misery in its slender chalice, should break, and with it the brain, whose kindly thoughts could worship only him. She could not hate him; her love was too o'ermastering. She could not chide him; for her tongue had learned naught but the lispings of childish adoration; she could not suspect him; for love is blind, and sees in sin but human frailty, in cru-

elty but passing passion. For that great sin—the murdering of her father—she could but pity, pity him—forever crying "O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown," whose "most sovereign reason, like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh" reveal "his blown youth blasted with ecstacy!"

She could pity—and pitying forgive, and forgiving—die for love's sake on his brave but blighted breast. She is the efflorescent fullness and embodiment of love, revealing its innate weakness and degeneracy, no less than its beauty and ennoblement. Love is to her the world, and all that it contains; and, when love is blasted then the world bursts like a pricked bubble, and dissolves in misty vapor.

That such love is a disease is too well evinced in the persistent tendency to sadness and melancholy such erotic states invariably generate. If the love of youth were a thoroughly healthful condition it would not easily incline its victims to insanity and suicide, but would rather quicken the brain, and solidify instead of dissipate the tissues of the nerves. I believe the pathology of love is yet to be learned by the wise of the race and they shall then know that all that passes as love, espec-

ially in early youth, is far from being beneficial to its possessor, but is rather the source of frequent disease and deterioration.

"Bitter indeed; for sad experience shows,
That love repulsed exceeds all other woes.
From his sad brow the wonted cheer is fled,
Low on his breast declines his drooping head;
Nor can he find, while grief each sense o'erbears,
Voice for his plaint, or moisture for his tears.
Impatient Sorrow seeks its way to force,
But with too eager haste retards its course.
Each thought augments his wound's deep-rankling smart,
And sudden coldness freezes 'round his heart;
While, miserable fate! the godlike light
Of reason sinks eclipsed in endless night."

It is a remarkable fact, which shall some time call for more detailed and analytic statement, that all of Shakespeare's great lovers met with grim fatalities, and found the issue of their passion in the deep sluices of sorrow, suicide or tragic death. Whether it be Ophelia, Juliet, Cleopatra, Desdemona, in whatever clime, of whatever race, great as is their love their misery is as great, the profounder their passion the speedier it leads them down the shadowy way of suicide or death. But

not so the love of Miranda, of Portia or Nerissa, of Rosalind, or any of the heroes or heroines of his jovial comedies.

Does Shakespeare in this curious fact intimate his suspicion of an obscure law of life, namely, that when the erotic passion gives rise to sadness, misery and melancholy, it is a serious and dangerous disease; but so long as it exhilarates and exalts the emotions and mental functions, it is healthful and invigorating? I am not prepared to say that this is a final conclusion of mine in reviewing Shakespeare's marvellous incarnations of love, but it seems to me to be quite plainly intimated on the surface of his work, and undoubtedly to have been a part of his great scheme of education. Whether Shakespeare knew it or not; or whether it was mere accident and the result of his intuitive apprehension of natural law, he so cleverly classified the various qualities and strata of love, and always so faithfully delineated their characteristics and history, that this much we now know, his climaxes were always true to life itself, and the master passion never possessed a more trustworthy historian or analyst than this universal genius of the ages.

Undoubtedly, when love overpowers all the sturdier passions of the breast, when it causes the mind to quiver and "lose the name of action," when it palsies the heart, slackens the pulses of the veins and weakens the tension of the nerves, so that reason falters and the affairs of earth sink into kaleidescopic and bewildering confusion, it can be regarded as little else than a disease, whose symptoms are sufficient to alarm the wary and enquiring.

All tendencies to melancholy should be studiously and vigorously avoided. Melancholy is in every sense of the word a degenerative disposition. If it is not in itself a disease it is a direct cause of pathological conditions, which have caused insufferable misery to the race. Melancholy is always either itself actual insanity or the sure road that leads to it. The victim of melancholia unredeemed is sure finally to enter the state of utter mental vacuity and emotional aberration, from which final reclamation may be impossible. Therefore when love exhibits this disposition it may be recognized as an initial disease whose future is fraught with danger and evil prophecy. It is, however, a most delicate and difficult disease to

conquer. No medicine of "gross earth" can minister to it; no physical force, or cold intellectual discourse can affect it. All of Laertes' kindly advice or Polonius' bitter rebuke could not mollify the passion in the tender heart of fair Ophelia. Under the spell of Hamlet she was irresponsible; his eye was like a radiant star that held her captive in its glorious orbit, or like a basilisk's which enchanted, hypnotized and slew her.

If we knew enough of the laws of the mind and the heart we might perhaps be justified in concluding that whenever love engenders in the human breast the emotions of intense sadness and approaching melancholy it may be nature's warning—the cry of the faithful guide that the precipice is just beyond where death lurks with inordinate desire. It would be natural to suppose that where love engenders cheerfulness and hope, buoyancy and energy, it is a healthful passion, and will lead the possessor on to happiness and success; but that where it is big with gloom, despair and despondency, it casts ahead its shadows that prophesy a fate fraught with woe and inviting to self-slaughter.

From this it is but logical to conclude that love

is not only a purely psychological state which always exhibits its effects in the physiological condition of man, but that it originates in a pure subjective stratum of the mind, whose laws we know are curious and arcane.

In the subjective realm of the mind are contained, as in a reservoir, all the impressions of past lives, and the current exercises both of mind and body, which at times are unexpectedly released and leap forth with surprising consequence. There are times when the normal mind gives way, and the subjective or sub-normal mind gaining the sovereignty sways the entire organism in a manner wholly foreign to its ordinary character. There are what are known as secondary personalities in each of us, which have been generated and developed, along with our ordinary conscious personalities, out of materials of which we are little if at all aware, and which when they become manifest are a total surprise and frequently a complete contradiction to our known personalities. Psychologically, insanity is now defined as a state in which the sub-normal mind has gained the ascendancy, and the normal mind been partially or totally suppressed.

The subjective or sub-normal mind is without the power of conscious reason or self-control. It operates much like a machine, following the course of whatever impressions or suggestions may be made to play upon it. At such times the mind is incapable of distinguishing between the actual and the apparent, between shadow and substance, between dream and thought. It operates as it does in our nightly dreams, when we enter into a wholly foreign world of experience, and see and feel things of which in our wakeful states we are incapable.

Now doubtless nowhere else in literature do we find this pathetic and most amazing state of the mind more perfectly portrayed than in Shakespeare's characters. Whether he wished to have us understand that the alleged madness of Hamlet was mere pretense or an actual condition, nevertheless he makes Hamlet in all respects act the perfect part of a madman when he leaves off the control of his normal mind, and apparently suffers his sub-normal consciousness to hold sovereign sway. At such times he says things that are so utterly foreign to his ordinary character their very utterance frightens his hearers into the be-

lief of his total and incurable madness. We shall in the next lecture discuss the problem of Hamlet's insanity, and therefore at this juncture shall comment no further upon it.

But in his so-called pretended madness Shakespeare causes him to exhibit the presence of the same psychological law as does Ophelia in her state of actual insanity. In each case there rise from the deeps of the unconscious reservoir of past experience such forms of thought and fumes of passion as utterly dissipate the normal stability of the mind and cause it to assume an atmosphere of bewilderment and perplexing irrationality.

When Hamlet charges Ophelia with false painting, and dangerous lapses from chastity, whether mad or not, he undoubtedly is under the influence of thoughts which had frequently flitted through his mind, but to which he had never given outward expression; and in these moments of extreme excitement, when the normal reason is suppressed, they leap into prominence and mount the throne of his consciousness. Then, ere he is aware, they have sprung from his lips, and his mouth gives expression to what had heretofore

HENRY IRVING AS HAMLET

Aye, sir; to be honest as this world goes is to be as one man picked out of ten thousand.

Act II, Sc. II.

lain silent in the unruffled depths of his residuary memory. This law it seems to me fully accounts for Ophelia's strange and unwonted expressions of ribaldry in song and comment after she is demented, when she glides like a wandering sylph on the scene to horrify and confound all who hear her. These songs may have been sung to her by some crude and uncultured nurse, who not knowing the injury she was inflicting on her infant mind, filled it with leud and salacious images, which had lain undisturbed through all these years, and were aroused to conscious expression only after reason and the control of the will were frustrated. This condition frequently presents itself in feverish patients, or hysterical subjects half demented with pain. Then thoughts and images which for years may have lain buried in their unconscious memories, suddenly come to the surface and clamor for expression. Then the purest lips become the mouthpiece of profanity and base vulgarisms; the chastest tongue is suddenly converted into an instrument of ribaldry and lecherous imaginings; and apparently the body would willingly yield to demands from which in its normal state it would flee in horror and exasperation.

When therefore we behold the spotless and beautiful Ophelia so utterly devoid of reason and propriety as to give expression to thoughts, which, when she was herself, she had as lief die as to speak, we see how perfectly and with what faultless art the matchless master has portrayed her. She is indeed mad, mad, beyond redemption. She recognizes no one whom she once held most dear.

It is sickening enough to behold her gliding past the king and queen, as if she never knew them, and singing to them her pathetic snatches of childish song; but when at last her brother enters, and even to him also her mind is an utter blank, and she sings and plays with him in the same distant and indifferent manner as with all the rest; when she gives him rosemary for remembrance and scatters the wild flowers at his feet; we see how absolutely her reason is dethroned, how vacant her brain, how feelingless, because of unutterable misery, is her broken heart. And when at last that stormy scene occurs, when Hamlet, returned, finds his fair Ophelia dead and buried, and leaps into the grave to wrestle with her vengeful brother, who can doubt that could she

arise in her mournful shroud and gaze upon them, they would both appear but as struggling shadows, in whom she would recognize neither her brother nor her adorable lover?

What symbols of human passion have we here! The sad Ophelia (incarnation of beauty, tenderness and forgiveness, drowned of her own vacant volition); the passionate brother in anger wrestling with the protesting lover, who is himself the direct cause of her overthrow and of the brother's deplorable fate. The strain of human suffering has been drawn so far that the pall of madness seems to have fallen on them all. Each of the struggling men has apparently lost his reason in the sudden burst of angry passion, while at their feet deep within the covering earth lay the body of her who was indeed the victim of a madness that dragged her in its clutches to the fatal pond.

The gloom of the tragedy, at this juncture, grows so thick and maudlin it almost sickens one with sympathetic pain. We cannot hate or traduce Hamlet, the actual though unwitting cause of all this woe, for we feel his own suffering is so great that in entangling him it also caught in its net all with whom he came in contact. Like Ophelia,

we can only pity, and scarcely blame him. But without assuming, as she did, that he is at least somewhat tinged with that same madness that he caused in her, we could but impatiently restrain ourselves from cursing him and crying down vengeance on his head. The very fact that we must pity him proves that instinctively we feel he is not wholly subject to his own control, and therefore not entirely responsible for his bloody and distracting deeds. But of this more in our next lecture.

For Laertes we can have but the utmost sympathy. Deprived of a devoted father and a most chaste and loving sister, what wonder his natural impulse was to avenge the murderer at the instant of his discovery. When he meets his sister distraught, and anon beholds her body brought in dead from the watery grave, what wonder his heart bursts; and when there appears a rival of his lamentations, in whom he discovers the murderer of his father and the false lover of his sister, it is but natural he should become instantly wild with furious anger and seek to slay him on the spot.

And yet when we recall that these two men so

wholly forgot the sanctity of the scene at which they enacted the drama of their emotions, when we recall that it was at the grave of Ophelia where they fought with such harrowing passion, it appeals to us as the very climax of the pathetic and achieves a triumph of dramatic art seldom attained. It is a scene so delicate it could easily have been made either ludicrous or offensive. Had not the playwright been able so gradually to shape the progress of this scene that the climax is attained almost before we are aware, perhaps we could not have endured it, and would have hissed it off the stage. Had not our feelings of curiosity and sympathy been slowly played upon by the dramatist, first in introducing the grave diggers, by whose witticisms we are kept for awhile in good humor; then by suffering Hamlet to appear at the side of the grave, and chaffing with the diggers gradually prepare us for the entrance of the dead body of Ophelia, and the sudden discovery by him that the grave is for her, and she is mourned by the royal family and even by her brother who has returned from the wars; had not all these most interesting scenes preceded the extraordinary outburst of passion between

the rivals of devotion to her rigid body, I say, perhaps we could not have endured the unseemly effort of two men to prove by their physical struggle which is the more in love with her. But Shakespeare never fails. The scene, with all its delicacy, is so roundly and harmoniously wrought to the very climax of perfection, that instead of causing us offence, it rather harrows our sympathetic emotion to an almost unendurable tension.

It seems to me, therefore, that modern actors greatly err, not to say that they violate the text of the master, when they refuse to carry out his exact stage instructions, in this most maddening scene. Unless they can as gradually cultivate the interest and ingratiate the sympathy of their auditors by their acting, as does the dramatist his readers by his words, so that when the time comes for leaping into the grave they can do so as inoffensively to the audience as the act seems to be natural to the readers, then I can but conclude that they have failed in attaining the purpose of the dramatist and fall short of his ideal.

The very fact that he instructed Laertes and Hamlet to leap into the grave, and that it appeared to him to be the natural climax of a most

fiery and uncontrollable passion, shows that he had so wrought up his own emotions in the preparation of the play that it seemed to him no other justifiable conclusion could be reached, and that without that ultra exhibition of insane anger and mutual hatred, the audience could not be wrought to the highest pitch of interest and sympathy. Besides, this very act, of rudely and forgetfully leaping into the grave, each to snatch from her cold lips the final kiss of farewell, by its very primitiveness and aboriginal folly, proves how completely both men had lost themselves and been swept beyond all presence of mind and thought of propriety. Possibly it may also argue somewhat in favor of the theory of the madness of Hamlet; but if so with the authority of the author himself.

But that a scene more somberly pathetic, more primitively tragic, more rasping to the heart and distracting to the mind could be conceived is difficult to believe. Herein are staged, with startling effect, the emotions of sorrow, sympathy and remorse. Filial affection points demurely at its beautiful victim that lies there in the cold and mantling earth; fraternal affection marks its

angered and vengeful victim who for the last kiss upon the frigid cheek of his dear sister would risk his life in a struggle with a supposed madman; whilst sexual affection, the hot, erotic passion of the heart that only a true and strong man can bear for the one he conceives as his faultless ideal, designates its victim in the rash and reckless figure of one who rushes uninvited on the scene to challenge all the hosts of heaven and hell to disapproval of his love.

And yet we may question whether Hamlet's wild profession of devotion to the sweet Ophelia is mere acting, the furious outburst of a madman, or the purposed and intended taunt to one who is fated to become his slayer? It is a problem difficult to solve. One thing only we know. After this clamorous profession of his adoration of the fair Ophelia; after he storms out "I loved her; forty thousand brothers could not with all their quality of love make up my sum"; henceforth he is silent to the hour of his death on the theme of his agonizing passion. Never again does the name of Ophelia escape his lips. She seems to have glided wholly out of his memory as stealthily as she first wandered into his life. So rapidly congregate the

clouds and tempests of passion round his head; so sombre, fierce and tragic culminate the climaxes of his fate; that her, who as the beauteous flower of the morn now lies trampled and faded in the dusty way, he passes by unnoticed.

Is she then no more to him than the shadow of a forgotten dream, the vague recall of a half-remembered song, the dim spectre of an innocent love whose lips one time touched his and left the impress of a trembling kiss? Is she no more than the echo of a purling stream whose music once cheered the weary traveller, whose sweet and cool waters soothed his fevered tongue? Is she but like the gilded morning cloud, whose momentary presence gave light and joy to the heart, but whose evanishment has taken with it both its glory and remembrance? Or is she like the painful echo of a wail whose voice will never silence, whose plaintive song will never cease?

We know not. All we do know is that from Hamlet's lips never more escapes a word that reveals to us his thoughts concerning her. But may it not be that his love was truly so great and oppressive the recall of it was more than he could bear; and that, like the stoical and

sincere Spinoza, he prefers to make his heart the silent tomb which shall forever hold the dead body of his dear love, unseen of the world, unapproached by the wanton winds of rumor? Somehow we cannot but feel the piercing pathos of his insane clamor when he cries to Laertes:

> "Dost thou come here to whine?
> To outface me with leaping in her grave?
> Be buried quick with her and so will I;
> And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
> Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
> Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
> Make Ossa like a wart!"

O burning, sorrow-flamed and sin-singed soul, who can but pity thee! O beautiful, innocent, love-enravished Ophelia, better in thy grave, all ignorant of thy lover's sad estate! Love only is the revealer of love's secrets. And would one know the true nature of Hamlet's most complex and mysterious heart one must like Ophelia have known what she conceived to be the true depths and constancy of his devoted friendship. Yet one can but bid her farewell with the tears streaming from one's eyes; for well one knows she is not the fabulous figment of a poet's brain, but

the concrete and faultless presentation of millions of Eve's daughters, whose woesome lot is ushered on the earth with falsely lighted clouds of glory, and whose exit is through gloom and melancholy, accompanied by the dirge of clamorous remorse, mingled with the plaintive notes of pity, that haunt the memory like the resounding echoes of the never silent sea!

V

WAS HAMLET INSANE?

WAS HAMLET INSANE?

IN the investigation of the character of Hamlet it must not be forgotten that we are studying the genius of Shakespeare. In no respect, perhaps, is this matchless genius exemplified more effectively than in the analysis of Hamlet's mental condition. So perfectly has the master-artist wrought in the creation of this character that the effort to comprehend it has caused the keenest contention among the world's most learned critics.

On the one hand it is assumed that the insanity of Hamlet is a mere simulation, which is in no sense of the word to be conceived as a real pathological condition, but is purposely assumed by the melancholy Dane to protect himself in his intended murder of the usurpatious king; while, on the other hand, it is as tenaciously held that the insanity is genuine, and so perfectly portrayed that it would be impossible for the most accurate alienist to present its delineations with greater medical exactness or with more complete psychological detail. So true is this that lengthy volumes have been written in defence of both the theories, and from the time that the character

began to be presented on the stage there have been profoundly intelligent actors who have assumed the title rôle from either point of view without violence to the text or the spirit of the drama.

From this fact it is apparent the author has so perfectly done his work that whether the character be construed as actually insane or merely simulating, it is almost impossible to distinguish between what should be considered simulation and what genuine. First of all then I desire to emphasize the artistic supremacy of the writer and impress upon the reader the fact that he must have been not only a most thorough going student of human nature, but also one of the profoundest psychological authorities of his age.

It will be my pleasure to show that he not only far outstripped his contemporary students and philosophers, but that he forged so far along the ages as to be almost abreast with our present advanced knowledge of scientific psychology. Indeed I shall show that no literature extant in his time, displayed such intimate and precise acquaintance with the curious, not to say mysterious, workings of the human mind, as the writings of Shakespeare. However, shortly after he himself ended

his literary career, there appeared a contemporary author, who, working out a theory of psychology from his own deep and sorrowful experiences, proved first, that Shakespeare's intuitive knowledge was absolutely correct, and second, that little is known today, in this regard, beyond what he himself discovered.

The remarkable coincidence and mutual corroboration which may be traced between the development of Hamlet's psychological characteristics and those that are so minutely described by the other author to whom I am referring, would make one think, as I shall show a little later, that Shakespeare had borrowed his pattern for Hamlet's mentality directly from him. Were it not for the discrepancy of dates, the other author not having published his work for nearly a quarter of a century subsequent to the appearance of Hamlet, it would be quite difficult to reach any other conclusion. But because of this mutual though unconscious corroboration by two authors, who have traced the nature and effects of melancholy along individual but parallel lines, I think we shall be able the better to reach a rational conclusion concerning the real condition of Hamlet's mind

as Shakespeare intended we should apprehend it.

The work to which I am referring is that known as Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," published in 1621, whereas according to accepted authority Hamlet was first registered in 1602, and printed in 1603, slightly over three hundred years ago.

I shall show that by following the outlines traced by this remarkable man, who did but little more than develop in his keen analysis his own mental condition, we shall be able to reach a fairly rational interpretation of the true nature of Hamlet's mind. I shall then follow up these conclusions with some very recent authorities which will, I think, even more effectively assist us in reaching what may be a sound solution of the perplexing problem. Yet in view of the fact that so many minds have differed on this theme it would be but the extreme of dogmatism for one to insist that he had reached the final interpretation and one that scholars must ultimately accept. Doubtless as long as the cultured world reads Hamlet and acquaints itself with the ever-surprising developments of scientific psychology there will be differences of interpretation and warring schools extant.

I shall first study the plan on which the drama was constructed and trace the several arguments of importance which have been advanced in advocacy of the opposite theories relating to his mental state. At the outset then we must give full force to the fact that the plot of the tragedy is not at all original with Shakespeare, but has been confessedly borrowed, as I have previously stated in this course of lectures, from a French dramatist of his day, by the name of Francis de Belleforest. Now in Belleforest's chronicle it is distinctly asserted that Hamlet simulated the mental state of a madman in order to frustrate the designs of the usurping King, and secure himself against danger.

If we are to close the argument here and say that because Shakespeare borrowed the plot from the Frenchman, or even based it on the old English drama, now lost, it must be evident that he meant Hamlet only to feign insanity, it would be utterly unnecessary to enter deeper into the discussion. But the fact obtrudes itself that notwithstanding we have the clear authority that the original French Hamlet did but simulate madness, as unequivocally as did Edgar in Lear, yet

when we study the Shakespearean Hamlet we are confused in our analysis of it, and our judgment is divided between genuine and pretended madness in the character. How shall we account for this apparent inconsistency?

The Hamlet of Belleforest was a crude, coarse, revengeful, unmeditative, and bloodthirsty murderer. The Hamlet of Shakespeare is just the contrary. He is a highly intellectual, pensive, philosophic and melancholic character. The construction of such a character, therefore, while it might be mentally cast after the original or primitive Hamlet, would work out altogether different results in detail. In the latter character if the madness is to be a simulation it will undoubtedly be so idealized, be woven in such a web of deftness, subtility and finesse, that it could not be as apparent and certain as was the simulation of the crude Hamlet of primitive tradition.

Hence this mere fact in itself, namely that Shakespeare borrowed the plot from Belleforest with its avowed simulation of insanity, in no degree assists us in the solution of the enigma of the Shakespearean Hamlet, for the reason that in the one the simulation would be palpable and be-

yond question, while in the other it would be involved and discovered but with difficulty. Hence the first argument usually advanced in favor of simulation must be regarded as purely neutral and in no wise a factor in the solution for which we are striving.

We are assured, however, by those who are convinced of Hamlet's conscious assumption of insanity, that he himself positively indicates his purpose, in his conversation with Horatio immediately after the conference with the Ghost. In the oath that he causes his friends to take on the hilt of his sword wherein he says, "So help you mercy, how strange or odd so e'er I bear myself, as I perchance hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on," it is contended he clearly intimates his purpose of assuming some exterior appearance that may be akin to madness. Doubtless at this moment some such resolution had vaguely shaped itself in his mind. Indeed we discern an immediate intimation of what "antic disposition" he might put on in the quaint and puzzling reception he gives to Horatio after they meet on the final exit of the spirit.

Horatio hastens to him all solicitous of the na-

ture of the interview and with undisguised anticipation of some startling revelation. Hamlet had privately spoken to the Ghost, had enjoyed the extraordinary privilege of conversing with one who had "returned from the bourn of that undiscovered country," and what wonders would he not divulge to his excited friend who now rushes toward him with eager expectation!

Then Hamlet puts on an "antic disposition." To Horatio's nervous questioning he replies with vexatious gaiety and abandon, as if he were to reveal something marvellous. "There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark, but he's an arrant knave." This he speedily follows with more wanton bantering of a similar character, till Horatio replies in despair, "These are but wild and whirling words, my lord." Now, in so much as Hamlet afterwards, in private, reveals the real nature of the Ghost's narrative to Horatio, we may justly assume that he refused to do so on this occasion because of the presence of Bernardo and Marcellus, whom he apparently did not feel disposed to trust as implicitly as he did Horatio. Therefore he begins to assume his "antic disposition" of disguise and seeming indifference; which is very

much like the disposition he puts on afterwards toward Polonius throughout the play until he unintentionally slays him.

It seems to me, therefore, all we can justly or logically deduce from this famous remark of Hamlet is that the first effect on him of his conference with the Ghost was the deep conviction that he must keep the solemn revelation he had heard from those lips of the dead forever sealed in the secrecy of his own soul, till such time as he had consummated the act of final vengeance on which the spirit had commissioned him.

We shall see further on that whenever he is conscious of his air of assumed indifference he puts on this same "antic disposition" of forced gaiety and wanton sarcasm; but when he loses himself absolutely in the fury of a consuming passion he knows nothing of such a disposition, but reveals the deep flame of madness that burns within his vitals. I will say, at this juncture, that we must carefully distinguish between these two opposing moods—the one of pretended gaiety and forced indifference, and the other of profound melancholy and "towering passion"—if we would discover the real key to his character and discern the true nature of his malady.

That this point may be made more emphatic let us review several of the scenes wherein these two opposite dispositions of Hamlet are clearly disclosed. In his various conversations with Polonius, with Guilderstern and Rosencrantz, when in the presence of witnesses, and even partially with Ophelia (save where he momentarily yields to the genuine love he feels for her), it is very apparent he plays a part—puts on an antic disposition. It would be most absurd and untenable, as I shall soon show, to assume that Hamlet had reached the stage of complete dementia, in the course of his malady. In that stage of mental disease the patient loses all coherency of speech and logical relation of words.

But Shakespeare never permits his Hamlet to reach that stage of dementia, save in the speeches wherein he clearly reveals the fact that he is but playing. As where he says to Polonius, who questions him, "Yes, you are a fishmonger," and then proceeds most unmercifully to banter him. Where he makes the "tedious old fool" see a whale, a camel and a weasel almost simultaneously in the same cloud. In all these conversations with Polonius he puts on the air of

complete madness, and is undoubtedly conscious that he is deceiving the old premier, and enjoys the sport with the keenest relish.

Likewise in his conversations with Guilderstern and Rosencrantz he plays the same daring rôle, utterly confusing them, especially after his slaughter of Polonius. And in particular do we note this fact in his conversation with the King after the King calls him to court to answer for the body of the slain minister of state. In these situations we see quite clearly how Hamlet would devise it as a safe and most deluding performance on his part to play the act of the confirmed madman, saying to himself with conclusive logic, "Now is the time for me to play the part *in fact*. If the King believes me to be really mad he will not dare to punish me for the deed, but will seek in some way to excuse my crime."

Hamlet being really mad might hope for the King's leniency. But if he had slain Polonius in cold blood and in full possession of his faculties, the King would have a just cause against him and might order him to the executioner. Hence Hamlet's only hope of escape is the deepening of the plot of madness, with which madness the entire

began to be presented on the stage there have been profoundly intelligent actors who have assumed the title rôle from either point of view without violence to the text or the spirit of the drama.

From this fact it is apparent the author has so perfectly done his work that whether the character be construed as actually insane or merely simulating, it is almost impossible to distinguish between what should be considered simulation and what genuine. First of all then I desire to emphasize the artistic supremacy of the writer and impress upon the reader the fact that he must have been not only a most thorough going student of human nature, but also one of the profoundest psychological authorities of his age.

It will be my pleasure to show that he not only far outstripped his contemporary students and philosophers, but that he forged so far along the ages as to be almost abreast with our present advanced knowledge of scientific psychology. Indeed I shall show that no literature extant in his time, displayed such intimate and precise acquaintance with the curious, not to say mysterious, workings of the human mind, as the writings of Shakespeare. However, shortly after he himself ended

his literary career, there appeared a contemporary author, who, working out a theory of psychology from his own deep and sorrowful experiences, proved first, that Shakespeare's intuitive knowledge was absolutely correct, and second, that little is known today, in this regard, beyond what he himself discovered.

The remarkable coincidence and mutual corroboration which may be traced between the development of Hamlet's psychological characteristics and those that are so minutely described by the other author to whom I am referring, would make one think, as I shall show a little later, that Shakespeare had borrowed his pattern for Hamlet's mentality directly from him. Were it not for the discrepancy of dates, the other author not having published his work for nearly a quarter of a century subsequent to the appearance of Hamlet, it would be quite difficult to reach any other conclusion. But because of this mutual though unconscious corroboration by two authors, who have traced the nature and effects of melancholy along individual but parallel lines, I think we shall be able the better to reach a rational conclusion concerning the real condition of Hamlet's mind

her after a period of separation, he is in a most unhappy state of mind. His native self, sincerely sad and most inconsolably downcast, has again possessed him. More seriously than ever the thought of suicide is contemplated. He is in profound meditation on the theme "To be or not to be," when suddenly he espies her. His first prompting is that of love: "Nymph in thy orisons be all my sins remembered" sorrowfully he exclaims.

Now in the spirited and mournful conversation that ensues it will be noticed that the two dispositions of Hamlet: the assumed "antic disposition," and the other one of natural "weakness and melancholy," are constantly playing for the mastery. At one time he is tender, kindly, pathetic and imploring. At another, he is full of anger, reprimand, irony and accusation. The latter feelings are palpably forced and simulated. He does not believe in his own criminations. He pities her because she is compelled to listen to his wild and unwarranted ravings. He knows that he is doing her gross injustice and he would if he dared, clutch her in his arms and bury her in his kisses and embraces.

Therefore we hear him pleading at first kindly and hopefully that she might ensconce herself in a nunnery where she would know nothing of his revengeful purposes against the King and of the final murder he contemplates. But when at length he discovers "the lawful espials," the King and Polonius concealed, anger, horror and exasperation strive for the conquest of his spirit, and with them suspicion of her whom he so much loves; together, all creating in his breast a tempest of passion and unmastered fury, which makes the King himself, and even Polonius, believe that it is more than the malady of love that possesses and has distempered him. In my judgment it is in this scene with Ophelia that the dramatist first reveals the rapidly developing stage of Hamlet's mental deterioration.

If the furious outburst of melancholic raving that Hamlet evinces in this scene had been its only and final exposition we might still be forced to conclude that it was mere pretension and splendid acting. Although we might regard it the extreme of cruelty, so to ignore and smite the delicate nature of his devoted sweetheart, still we would not be justified in concluding that his per-

formance was more than such emphatic simulation as he felt it necessary to assume under the circumstances to convince the concealed "espials" of his actual madness.

But this is not the only scene in which this passionate outburst is exhibited. Indeed in this scene we have its meagerest and least convincing manifestation. We witness it again and again in situations most appalling and horrifying, and in such manner as to assure us that it is really genuine and not assumed. We witness this exposition of his true psychological state in all his soliloquies, when alone, and with no thought of disclosing his heart to others; we witness it in the closet scene with his mother, when the supreme bête noire of his being—his uncle—is the topic of conversation; we witness it in the chapel scene when he is prompted to fall on the praying King and run him through; and we witness it finally and in a most flagrant manner in the grave scene where he quarrels and wrestles with Laertes, absolutely losing himself in the tempest of a "towering passion," which compels the queen to declare him really mad, and to confound even Horatio, his only bosom friend, the confidant of all his secrets.

I have therefore reached the conclusion that there is but one key that will unlock the mystery of the malady of Hamlet. *That key is the consciousness of the existence or presence of his uncle the King.* This fact, coupled with his native melancholy, which is of the deepest dye, I believe will help us fully to solve all the difficulties of the problem and diagnose the actual psychological disease that masters him. In order to appreciate this solution we must carefully follow the growth of the malady from the first appearance of Hamlet in the play to the closing scene. As we have before noted in these lectures the reigning King himself declares that it was the sudden death of his father that caused the complete transformation of Hamlet's mental state and brought on the condition of extreme melancholy and dejection. We know therefore that this disposition was not congenital with him, but was brought on by an artificial cause. What was that cause? The sudden taking off of the King his father.

Hamlet therefore first appears to us in the play in a most solemn state of mind, rebuking his mother for insinuating that his "nighted color" was the symbol only of apparent grief. "Seems,

madam, nay it is. I know not seems," he groans: "I have that within that passeth show." It is then all too apparent that Hamlet is already buried in the profoundest depths of gloom before the opening of the play. As yet he does not know the actual cause of his father's taking off, but is struggling with the two maddening emotions of grief and shame. This state of mind is revealed in the long, pathetic soliliquy in the first act just before Horatio has come to tell him of his father's reappearance. Shakespeare seems to have poured out his own soul in the sad monologue, "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew." His own sad disappointment in love at this time, his witnessing the pure flower of his devotions sullied by the base embraces of a low-minded traitor, were sufficient to inspire him with unequalled eloquence, put on the lips of one who saw the ideal of womanhood besmirched in the person of his own beloved and honored mother. Here is genuine, unpretended, heart-devouring sorrow. Here is melancholy already but one step from the "cliff that beetles o'er the base into the sea." It is no antic disposition when to himself he moans:

CHARLES DILLON AS HAMLET

How now! a rat?
Dead, for a ducat, dead. Act III, Sc. IV.

" How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world."

Already his condition seems to presage a mind "that wants discourse of reason" to stay him when the fatal revelation shall befall him. If made so melancholic by the knowledge of his mother's shamelessness shall we wonder that his mind gives way when afterwards confronted with the presence and prescribed commission of the Ghost?

His chief anger at first is against his mother, for having been so wanton and lavish of her loves, and to have married so quickly after her husband's death. But as yet he is ignorant of the King's crime. After the Ghost appears, however, and reveals the secret facts to him, urging him at the same time to be lenient toward his mother, we note how Hamlet is ever thrown into instant rage when he sees the King or hears mention of his name. Now I shall proceed to examine three scenes wherein I think the cause and nature of Hamlet's malady are clearly revealed. It must not be forgotten that I am employing the key to which I have referred, namely *Hamlet's consciousness of the King's existence or the King's personal presence.*

First, then, in his soliloquies Hamlet gradually reveals the growth of his malady from mere melancholy and utmost personal dejection, coupled with thought of self slaughter, to the desire for vengeance, bloodthirstiness and murder. Had it not been for the Ghost's injunction, undoubtedly when he was called to his mother's boudoir he would have gone with the intention of killing her. In fact he says as much. "Now is the witching time of night when churchyards yawn. Now could I drink hot blood and do such deeds as the day would quake to look on." Then he suddenly recalls the Ghost's injunction and cries in desperation, "I will speak *daggers* to her, but use none." He must however have had blood in his eye and in the menace of his countenance, for he has not spoken three sentences to her when she is affrighted and thinks he is going to kill her; then she cries for help and unwittingly causes the murder of Polonius.

Now it seems to me very clear from this tragic scene that Hamlet entered this mother's boudoir with the conviction in his heart that the King was also there in concealment, and while he would use only the daggers of speech to his mother, be-

cause the Ghost compelled that, to the King if he met him he would use the bloody dagger itself and gleefully thrust it through his breast. Therefore when he hears the cry for help from behind the arras, without a moment's pause he rushes his sword through the concealed figure, and afterwards emphatically declares, when gazing at the prostrate form of Polonius, "I thought it was thy better." Hence it is very apparent that it is the consciousness of the King's existence that so rages in the heart of Hamlet, and in this closet scene causes all the fury of his outburst of passion and vehement incrimination of his mother.

In all the soliloquies which follow, Hamlet is thinking only of blood, blood, blood! It is this to which I wish to call especial attention as a symptom that strongly reveals the nature of his distemper. The King's continued existence is his constant instigation to crime, till the melancholy of his mind is wholly swallowed up in the one overwhelming thought of vengeful murder. This thought I shall try to show developed into absolute monomania, excluding almost every other thought from his mind, and always revealing itself on every possible occasion.

Without the conclusion that Hamlet's malady had developed to the stage of the monomaniac, I cannot understand his language, nor follow his purposes, unless, indeed, I am to conclude that instead of being a noble and most honorable prince he was a vulgar brute bent on murderous vengeance and deeds of midnight villainy. No man of noble promptings, undemented and in his right mind, could ever have uttered the horrible thoughts that escaped from the lips of Hamlet when he saw the King praying and refused to slay him then because it would send his soul to heaven. Whoever reads that soliloquy must conclude that, if Hamlet is not possessed of some malady that has distorted the normal bent of his mind, he must henceforth be removed from the gallery of heroes that haunt our memories with uplifting recollections.

Again, and second, recall the wanton manner in which he causes the slaughter of his old friends Guilderstern and Rosencrantz. They had never harmed him, and at best could be but slightly suspected of being the King's conspirators. But when on the voyage he discovers the secret pallet on their person, signed by the King, calling for

his own slaughter so soon as they arrived in England, although he had no just right to conclude that they were privy to the contents of this sealed letter of instruction, he plays a sharp trick on them that results in their own execution, and then afterwards gloats over the fact in repeating the incident to Horatio.*

Now were Hamlet a truly upright and honorable man, he could never have accomplished this

* Hamlet himself makes it very clear that in compassing the execution of Guilderstern and Rosencrantz he felt that he was merely using them as fortunate tools placed in his hands to wreak vengeance on the king. "They are not near my conscience," he churlishly exclaims to Horatio in narrating the success of his plot against them. He palpably means to insinuate that the burden of their death does not weigh heavily on his conscience for he is not engaged so much in securing their destruction as in avenging himself on the king who sought to compass his death by shameless intrigue and invention. He makes his meaning still clearer by declaring "'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes between the pass and fell incensed points of mighty opposites." The metaphor used here is that of some one thrusting himself between the slashing and poison-pointed foils of a duel, receiving the death that was intended alone for the duelists engaged. Thus he felt that they deserved their deaths because they thrust themselves between the king and himself who were the mighty opposites, engaged in a mighty struggle. In this thought we again observe how the consciousness of the king's relation to any circumstance connected with him so darkens the conscience of Hamlet that he hesitates not to destroy whom he must, in his determined yet vacillating purpose of finally achieving the downfall and destruction of his royal enemy.

bloody and most unwarrantable deed, without compunctions of such oppressive nature as forever after to have darkened the atmosphere of his conscience. But instead he laughs at and gloats over it. Therefore he is either not the hero that Horatio informs us he is, when "cracked a noble heart," or he is the victim of a monomania that confused his sense of right and wrong, making him feel that any act, however horrible, *was justified if in any way it bore a logical relation with his plan of bloody vengeance on the King.* He did not think of Guilderstern and Rosencrantz when he accomplished their execution. He was thinking only of the King. They were the witting or unwitting agents of the King. That was enough. To compass their death would frustrate the King's purpose, and carry Hamlet nearer to the end of his final vengeful plot.

And, third, by the same theory only can I explain the unwarrantable and outrageous treatment of Laertes at the grave of Ophelia by Hamlet. Admit that he is a man in his senses fully equipped with the faculties of normal sanity, and you reduce him to a buffoon or a bully, a mouthy braggart or a wanton brute. Why should he, if

in his right mind, rave at Laertes because he was grieving over the death of his sister? Why should he boast of his love against a brother's natural and most worthy love? Why should Laertes rouse his angry passion, against whom he had no grievance in the world, but on the contrary toward whom he must have entertained the tenderest feelings because of being the brother of his unhappy sweetheart?

The sincerity of Hamlet's ebullition of anger cannot only not be questioned in this scene, but little less can we doubt that it, for the moment, wholly demented his mind. This is evidenced in the astonishing burst of pathetic rebuke to Laertes, who had done absolutely nothing to offend him, yet who Hamlet feels has most grossly and wilfully outraged his affections. After his furious outburst of anger he turns to Laertes and pitifully cries:—

"Hear you sir,
What is the reason that you have used me thus?
I loved you ever. But 'tis no matter
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew and dog will have his day!"

This sudden diversion from extreme anger to

rebuking pathos, and instant suspicion of the motive of one whose unwitting actions stirred his spleen, is as emphatic and characteristic an action of a madman as can well be conceived. If this be simulation, it is so perfect, the most skilled and experienced alienist could not possibly detect it.

He seems to be confused in his own mind as to what the real cause of his outburst was. He says to Horatio that it was the display of Laertes' "bravery of grief" that drove him into "a towering passion." But to Laertes himself he makes most humble apology when again they meet, and attributes his outburst of unwarrantable anger to his "madness," which "punishes him with sore distraction."

I do not think it is just to accuse Hamlet here of inconsistency or falsehood, trying to ingratiate himself in the continued confidence of Horatio by confessing to him it was the boast of Laertes that maddened him, and to regain the friendship of Laertes by assuring him he is afflicted with madness and at times knows not what he does. I think Hamlet by this time knew perfectly well that both of these self-accusations were truthful. That indeed he was possessed of a certain madness

which afflicted him with sore distraction, and that "weakness," touched to the quick by the boastful bravery of Laertes' affection for his sister, flamed his breast into a passion which instantly flew beyond his control.

But what is the cause of the immediate display of this distraction, this malady of madness? Let us recall that Hamlet and Laertes had not met for some time; that Hamlet had been exiled to England; that in meantime Ophelia had become crazed and was drowned; that here suddenly he sees her again, after long separation, but as a corpse; that in mind instinctively he associates her horrible fate with his own mental condition and his treatment of her; that he recalls it was the King's foul murder of his father which was the immediate cause of his estrangement from Ophelia, resulting in her deplorable death; that during the voyage he had discovered the King's plot to have him killed in England; that now suddenly he confronts the King in this public place, so soon after this maddening discovery; and now, while recalling all these events in a sort of hazy manner, he beholds the body of his lost sweetheart slowly lowered into the grave and her brother

leaping in to snatch a final kiss of farewell. Anger, vindictiveness, jealousy and revenge, envy and uncontrollable hatred, all mingle their confusing emotions in his breast till he feels himself torn by a thousand torments, and madly rushes on the victim who seems to be the immediate cause of the sudden blastment of his affections.

Now under such circumstances are not the actions of Hamlet at the grave precisely what those would be of a man whose wits are half torn to shreds because of unfathomable grief and measureless anger? This it seems to me is the meaning of his own confession to Laertes:

"What I have done,
That might your nature, honor, and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he is not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness."*

*The mental condition here described is similar to that recognized by alienists as "impulsive insanity." Dr. W. Hammond in his "Treatise on Insanity" refers to the case of a young lady who at sight of a bare shoulder is suddedly seized by the impulse to bite, and straightway sinks her teeth into the flesh of her victim. H. P. Stedman in "Men-

Of course I do not mean that this confession should be regarded as a revelation of the truth. For if he were mad, then it is worthless, as coming from a madman. If he be sane, then it is likewise worthless, for it might have been but the climax to the part he was playing, in passing for a madman. But I take it merely as Shakespeare's own explanation of Hamlet's complex character and apparent inconsistency of life. Had he not suddenly observed the King coming on the scene whom he had not yet met since the discovery of the plot to have himself slain in England, it is probable he might have restrained himself. But this seemed to be the immediate cause of his wild distemper. Every time the King appears on the scene, or any thought of the King occurs to him,

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tal Diseases" says: "'E. D' has been insane for several months, he appeared to improve, when on one occasion, while he was standing in his room, his attendant advanced toward him with the intention of passing, when the patient suddenly drew back and struck the attendant a blow which brought the latter to the floor. Immediately after it was over the patient apologized, and said he was very sorry and quite ashamed of himself; he could not tell what had led him to strike, especially his attendant, with whom he was on the most pleasant relations, but the concept suddenly flashed upon him and filled his mind as he saw him approach, and the impulse to strike became irresistible." See Sidis "Psychology of Suggestion."

it throws him into a paroxysm of anger and hurries him on in his desire to consummate his death.

To me therefore Hamlet appears as a monomaniac—mad only on one theme, sane absolutely on all others. But the theme on which he is mad is of such a character as to rouse the unworthiest and blackest portion of his nature; conjuring from unimagined depths of his being such unnatural and unwonted thoughts as companions of his misery that, for the time being, when they master him, they utterly transform his character, discolor his conscience and disorder his mental faculties.

It will be observed that Hamlet never flies into these towering passions of rage except in the presence of the King, or when concerned in some discussion relative to him. Since the appearance of the Ghost the very thought of the King awakens in him an uncontrollable distemper. If we shall but remember that Hamlet is a most utterly disconsolable and melancholy man, to whom the fretted golden canopy of heaven appears but as a dingy and fuliginous roof, from which naught emanates but prophesies of horror and amazement; if also we shall remember that he is pos-

sessed of the "weakness" of an almost uncontrollable temper, the exhibition of which we so often witness throughout the drama; if again we shall not forget that he is ever suspicious of all with whom he comes in contact, trusting but only one person in all the world; then again if we remember that he has been singularly marked, by a decree apparently from heaven, as a man commissioned to perform a deed from which his every nature instinctively revolts; we shall see not only motive sufficient, but enough of native tissue and timber woven in the fabric of a mental malady, as utterly betimes to drive reason from his throne and make of the victim a raving madman.

The fact that Hamlet has not reached the fixed stage of frenzy, or permanent madness, is doubtless what has confused many. But they seem to forget that the monomaniac is perfectly sane on all subjects save one; and that he never rages or loses his wits save when contemplating that touchstone of his temper.

Now that we have reviewed the several scenes wherein it seems to me the writer makes clear the diverse and conflicting characteristics of his hero, I shall here present an extract from the famous

contemporary of Shakespeare to whom I referred in the early part of this lecture, and note how well it describes the various stages of Hamlet's malady. In his "Anatomy of Melancholy," Burton says of this distemper, "Suspicion and jealousy are general symptoms. If two walk together, discourse, whisper, jest, he thinks presently they mean him, or if they talk with him, he is ready to misconstrue every word they speak and interpret it to the worst. Inconstant, they are, in all their actions; vertiginous, restless, unapt to resolve on any business; they will, and they will not; persuaded to and from upon every occasion; yet, if once resolved, obstinate and hard to be reconciled. They do, and by and by repent them of what they have done; so that both ways they are disquieted, of all hands, soon weary. They are of profound judgment in some things, excellent apprehensions, judicious, wise, witty; for melancholy advances men's conceits more than any humour whatever. Fearful, suspicious of all, yet again, many of them, desperate hair-brains; rash, careless, fit to be assassinates, as being void of all truth and sorrow. *Tedium vitae* (weariness of life) is a common symptom; they soon are tired with all

things;—often tempted to make away with themselves; they cannot die, they will not live; they complain, lament, weep, and think they lead a most melancholy life."

Were one asked to give an analysis of Hamlet's career, as depicted by Shakespeare, one could not devise a better description than what is here presented by Burton. Indeed, did we not know, we would be inclined to think that Shakespeare, who was a great copyist, might have taken this description for a pattern and built around it the perplexing characteristics of his hero. But the curious fact remains that these two authors writing, though in fashion so differently, on the same theme, reach conclusions so much alike that they seem to be almost copies of each other. Now couple with this fact that Burton was but describing his own malady, and not an imaginary one, and you see how accurate and truthful it must be.

Suppose, then, on such a character as Burton here describes, there had been imposed the horrible commission of regicide, so utterly revolting to his refined nature, can we not well see that it would develop all the symytoms of melancholic

madness, or monomania, precisely as they are set forth in the career of Hamlet? Therefore the only conclusion I can reach, which seems to me rational and in accord with scientific knowledge of the human mind, is that Hamlet was a victim of melancholic monomania, throwing him into states of temporary frenzy or utter madness, from which he speedily recovers. As says his mother at the grave of Ophelia:

> "This is mere madness;
> And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
> Anon, as patient as the female dove,
> When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
> His silence will sit drooping."

There is one further theory I desire briefly to advance in elucidation of Hamlet's singular mental condition, which has been but recently brought forth through psychological experimentation. There is a state that sometimes possesses people, which is called "automatic emotionalism;" under the influence of which they permit themselves to do most repulsive things, even while conscious of the absurdity or atrociousness of it, and yet seem to be incapable of resisting the temptation. Says one author (Boris Sidis, a recognized authority

CHARLES FECHTER AS HAMLET

Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? Act V, Sc. I

on Psychology) "The patient is fully aware of the absurdity of the idea, but still that idea continues to rise from the depths of his mind and insert itself into his mental operations." Again he says, describing a similar state of mind "In impulsive insanity we meet with a similar mental condition. A seemingly unaccountable impulse seizes on the mind of the patient, an impulse which is sometimes so overwhelming that restraint is simply unthinkable." (My readers will kindly note that this looks very much like a description of Hamlet's state of mind at Ophelia's grave when he leaps on Laertes). "No sooner," says our author, "does the impulse come into consciousness than it works itself out with fatal necessity. It is a kind of emotional automatism." Again he says "Pyromania, or the impulse to incendiarism, kleptomania, or the impulse to steal, homocidal or suicidal impulses—all of them belong to that peculiar form of mental alienation that may be characterised as impulsive insanity."

In my judgment this scientific description is a perfect analysis of Hamlet's true mental condition. If we couple with this description the fact that Hamlet saw hallucinations, a very common

symptom of this disease, and that under the influence of such hallucination he had been ordered to commit a most appalling deed, as well as to have been fired to the very deeps of his being by the revelation of his father's murder, we may well understand how so melancholy a person as he would have become constantly subject to the workings of what this author calls either emotional automatism or impulsive insanity.

To me I confess it is a soothing consolation to accept such an analysis of Hamlet's mind, for without it I could not hoist him to the high niche in Fame's honorable temple where tradition fain has set him. We would think of him as noble, tender, lofty-minded and soulfully aspiring to the purest ideals. Even in an age of coarse morals and intellectual deformity, we have been wont to see in him the very paragon of honor and climax of magnanimity. None, who has read Ophelia's sweet and pathetic description of him, (the portrait he had painted of himself on her memory by his splendid deeds of virtue and integrity before the affliction of his father's death and mother's shameful marriage had distorted his mind), can

but believe that he was indeed "the glass of fashion and the mould of form."

How then shall we account for such a sudden transformation of so noble a character into a cruel persecutor and bloodthirsty murderer, without conceiving that in the cracking of that heart there also came a rift in the lute of his noble mind? In all ages we have pitied those whose minds are weak or turned awry, and forgiven them their most shocking and abandoned deeds. Even so miserable a miscreant as Claudius, the murderous uncle and usurpatious King, recognizes this unwritten law of humanity, and believing Hamlet mad seeks not to call down judgment on him for his slaughter of Polonius.

Thus, then, let him rest in our memories. In intellect, untouched by the palsy of disease, his mind can think and reason with the best; but in will, sore and afflicted, because of the most grievous torture that can agonize a human soul. He is, when swept into the tempest of his passion,—while awhirl in the maelstrom of his malady,—irresponsible for his deeds, whose foulest must be overlooked by us with what charity we bestow upon a madman; yet in whom, when restored, we

discern again the brow of honor and the visage of integrity! We shall say, mingling our tears with Ophelia's, as we behold him now dead and seated on the throne of which he was in life deprived, and hear Horatio pray that "flights of angels may sing him to rest," what the poor girl said when overwhelmed with the belief of the utter dethronement of his lofty intellect:

"O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown;
Now see we that sovereign and most noble reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstacy!"

VI

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARACTERS IN HAMLET.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARACTERS IN HAMLET

TO read into an author's words a meaning which perchance he may not have meant to convey is an easy slip of the reviewer's pen. It is always difficult to know precisely what an author may have intended, what may have been his deeper and more recondite meanings, especially when his thoughts are presented not in argumentation and discursive speech, but in the embodiment of symbolism, allegory or character impersonation. The mind must first discern some clear idea of the author's half revealed or deep concealed thought before the reader can justly interpret his works. Our opinion, favorable or otherwise, will rest wholly upon the personal interpretation we make of the production we are perusing. Oft times because we lose sight of the author's point of view and read into his creation our own less abstruse conception, devoid of his finesse and casuistry, we find incongruities, the absence of logic and a want of interest.

Many of Shakespeare's plays have thus been criticized by those who seemed incapable of rising

to his mental or philosophical plane, who have not hesitated to denounce him as a literary pretender and a very wretched interpreter of human nature. His most bitter critics have been those who had thought the stage should portray to the fascinated listener only such scenes and characters as would be regarded as true exemplars to the discerning, and noble inspirations to the aspiring. A play for them must be a consistent production, revealing but one phase of life unmingled with incongruities or contradictions. It must be all tragedy or all comedy; all laughter or all tears.

To such critics the mingling of the sunshine with the glowing cloud—the redeeming glint of the silver lining—was disruptive of reason and subjective experience. The mind, they think, can grasp but one thought, or one phase of thought, at a single time. When men laugh they are so engaged in their frivolity or delight that they can but poorly contemplate the possibility of despondency or wretchedness. Hence to such critics there is not only inconsistency but something akin to savagery in the interplay between tragedy and comedy in the same performance. It appalls them as would the sudden outburst of laughter at a

funeral, or the shout of sensible delight at the lowering of the coffin into the grave. To such critics every tragedy of Shakespeare is an anomaly, nay, an atrocity, contrary to natural experience and subversive of the higher ideals of the race.

It is, indeed, a remarkable fact that among a people so simple, unaffected and amenable to natural impulse, as were the ancient Greeks, their moods of melancholy should be so discrete, so separate from their moments of mental exaltation and spiritual abandonment, that the two were never presented together in their dramatic plays, but were regarded as contradictory and mutually conflicting. For centuries this idea prevailed in literature, even till the time of Shakespeare, whose daring originality so amazed and angered his critics that they wholly lost sight of his sublime point of view.

But as I shall contend in a subsequent lecture, Shakespeare is distinctly a portrait painter, a delineator of life and character. When, therefore, he found tears and smiles intermingled in the course of human events—that in short men were not always only happy nor always only sad,

but that ever the currents, though flowing in opposite courses, often met and intermingled, he so presented them in his descriptive plays. However, unless this point of view were discerned by the student he would experience a constant shock to his finer or at least conventional feelings, and would be able to conjure but little sympathy in his soul with Shakespeare's immortal creations.

A great philosopher, for instance, who wrote about 160 years after the play of Hamlet was written, Voltaire, thus speaks disparagingly of Shakespeare's unparalleled masterpiece. "Far be it from me to justify everything that is in that drama (Hamlet). It is a vulgar and barbarous drama that would not be tolerated by the vilest populace of France or Italy. Hamlet becomes crazy in the first act, and his mistress in the third; the prince slays the father of his mistress under the pretense of killing a rat, and the heroine throws herself into a river; a grave is dug upon the stage, and the grave diggers talk quodlibets worthy of themselves, while holding skulls in their hands. Hamlet responds to their nasty vulgarities in silliness no less disgusting. Hamlet, his mother and father-in-law carouse on the stage;

songs are sung; here is quarrelling, fighting, killing,—one would imagine this piece to be the work of a drunken savage. But amidst all those vulgar irregularities, which to this day make the English drama so absurd and so barbarous, there are to be found in Hamlet some sublime passages worthy of the greatest genius. It seems as though nature had mingled in the brain of Shakespeare the greatest conceivable strength and grandeur with whatsoever witless vulgarity can devise as lowest and most detestable."

We are glad to know that Voltaire's opinion of Shakespeare is not the national opinion of the French people. Since his day many of the chief French critics and litterateurs have praised him without stint. Evidently, however, Voltaire failed to appreciate the fulness and comprehensiveness of Shakespeare's genius, because he was unable to arrive at the same point of view. Voltaire's conception of the drama being that nothing should be presented on the stage but what is wholesome and uplifting; that such blotches as are actually found in human characters should in literature and the drama be wholly suppressed in order that the mind might be allured by some fantastic il-

lusionment; he was naturally shocked when he read in Shakespeare the appalling and gross display of baseness, depravity and flagrant immorality. But Voltaire failed to see, as I shall hereafter show, that Shakespeare is neither a preacher nor a protagonist of morality; that he is, even as nature herself, merely unmoral, presenting life and character as they actually exist, and suffering their exhibitions to affect humankind as they may.

Therefore in Shakespeare's tragedies all phases of life and experience are presented; alike the tears and the laughter; the joy and the sorrow; the hope and despair; the purity of noble affection and the detestableness of vulgar lust and besotted passion. He so balances and arranges them that they affect the understanding in an ensemble of grandeur and sublimity which, despite the enormity of the crime displayed, awakens in the reader an ambition to ascend to loftier heights of moral attainment.

We shall find this especially true of the great tragedy we are in particular contemplating. Into the tragedy of Hamlet, Shakespeare not only throws all the splendor of his abandoned and prolific genius; he likewise throws *himself*—his life,

his experiences, his deep sorrows, his passionate pain, his maddening despondency, his tragic contemplation of suicide and self-destruction. For indeed until we well understand the man, Shakespeare, we are ill prepared to appreciate the character of Hamlet. When he wrote this play he had not only attained the maximum development of his genius but also mature and most saddening experiences. For it seems to be a very truth that Shakespeare meant to portray himself, his own life, in the melancholy and oppressive story of the distinguished Danish prince.* None would be able to discern Shakespeare in his dramatic creations; but elsewhere he affords us glimpses into his inner life, that enable us with such knowledge to decipher him somewhat in the productions of his brain. In his sonnets more especially he reveals himself to us. As when he sings:

*"Just such a crisis, bringing with it the 'loss of all his mirth,' Shakespeare himself recently had undergone. He had lost in the previous year the protectors of his youth. The woman he had loved, and to whom he had looked up to as to a being of a rarer, loftier order, had all of a sudden proved to be a heartless, faithless wanton. The friend he loved, worshipped and adored, had conspired against him with this woman, laughed at him in her arms, betrayed his confidence, and treated him with coldness and distance. Even the prospect of winning the poet's wreath had been overcast for him. Truly he had seen his illusion vanish and his vision of the world fall to ruins."—George Brandes.

"When in disgrace with fortune's and men's eyes
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate;"

we discern an intimation of some profound woe which has embittered his soul and given to his mind the melancholic complexion that cast its pale hue over that of Hamlet. But at the same time he was instinctively so jubilant and hilarious, his spirits were always so buoyant and elastic, that such moods must have been but temporary. Nevertheless they left their deep impress on his soul, and when he created his great characters, unconsciously these deeper and buried emotions of past experience rose to the surface and imbedded themselves into the structures he was erecting.

Thus do we see in "Hamlet" almost the whole of life; its gaiety, carousing and abandonment; its solemnity and serious contemplation of checkered possibilities in this world and "that undiscovered bourn from which no traveler returns;" the beauty and bewildering joy of innocent love and the maddening horror of unrequited affection; the indescribable shock occasioned by the discovery of a secret murder, and the "deep damnation" of a

cold, unprovoked and premeditated fratricide; the dismay and feverish distraction which darkens the soul when the thought o'ertakes it that possibly the spirits of departed tenants of the flesh may revisit the earth "in the witching time of night when church yards yawn;" the heroism of a noble brother vainly fighting for the honor and reclamation of his outraged suicide-sister; the meandering and verbose philosophy of garrulous age, which has outlived its usefulness but not its wit; the shameless defilement of a once noble queen, whose sins cry rank to heaven and so offend the white soul of her princely son she cannot withstand his rebuke that "speaks daggers but uses none;" and the final culmination, wherein is seen the fruitage of crime in swift retaliation—the general death of all who fall beneath its blight—and the sad overthrow and wreckage of that gentle frame in which so long has been tenanted the white soul of one who ever refused "with candied tongue to lick absurd pomp," or to "crook the pregnant hinges of the knee" in abject fawning to sceptred wrong, or earthly infamy crowned with divine authority.

With this thought in mind, then, to me the en-

tire play presents a somewhat different phase than as it has appeared to the conventional critic. It seems to me the play is a species of symbolism or allegory, and that through these semi-historic semblances Shakespeare reveals to us the principles of his recondite philosophy and his general interpretation of human life. When we investigate the original sources from which the playwright secured his plot and then observe what a halo of idealism he has cast over all the characters he found in historic chronicles, we may easily discern that he had no thought of merely representing in dramatic form a highly interesting though maudlin and pessimistic incident of Danish history; but that he uses these events as a worthy framework around which to erect his resplendent structure of philosophic wisdom and allegorical innuendo.

I do not wish to convey the idea that the play of "Hamlet" is an allegory in the usual form or that its characters are allegorical in the sense of being mythical or endued with miraculous qualities. But I mean that notwithstanding the semblant historical accuracy with which the chief characters are drawn by the master hand, never-

theless the use which is made of each character, (namely) to read into it a specific interpretation of life, is in its nature allegorical and phantastic.

That I may make my meaning clear and that we may be able to discern the deeper thought which it seems to me Shakespeare attempted to reveal in the distinguished characters of the play, I shall devote this essay to describing them and the allegorical conception which I believe they involve. I am aware that it may appear rather bold to attempt this; for I am not sure that any other critic has ever taken this view; and that my interpretation may therefore be frowned down as chimerical and absurd. Nevertheless I shall present it for the consideration of the reader; and if acceptable, Shakespeare's reputation will not be the worse, whereas if rejected, I need but suffer a momentary humiliation.

First, then, our study shall be the King of Denmark, reigning when the play begins. Before the opening of the play this king has slain his brother, and thus secured the throne. The murder was secret and so performed that discovery seemed impossible. He had poured poison into the victim's ears, while asleep. He has not

only secured the throne by this foul murder but also the Queen, his brother's spouse, who is the mother of Prince Hamlet. The reigning King is presented as a man of strong will, perverse nature, and assuming an air of condescending kindness toward the outraged and melancholy son.

He thus addresses him to allay his heart's sorrow for his father's taking off:

"'T is sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father;
That father lost, lost his; and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow; but to persevere
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief;
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd:
For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart?"

Thus feeling his way, as if oblivious of his mortal crime, he seeks to allay his own inward feelings of fear and solicitude for his deed, as

much as to calm the tumultuous bosom of his adopted son. In this first appearance of the king he looms upon us as the bold embodiment of the hypocritical criminal. He knows well the unspeakable deed he has performed. Deep in the secret of his heart he must have said to himself a thousand times that which he exclaimed when, in a later scene he is about to kneel in prayer—like a tortured hypocrite snivelling at the remembrance of his unpardonable guilt—

"O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon it,
A brother's murder! Pray can I not;
"Though inclination be as sharp as will . . . .
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul that struggling to be free
Art more engaged! Help angels! Make assay!
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!"

And yet despite this inward sense of conscious guilt he carries ever a forward front, tenacious of authority, and a most brazen demeanor. Strong in his belief that his deed can never be discovered, that his son is melancholy only because of the

natural sorrow at his father's taking off, and but little conceiving that Hamlet has the most remote apprehension of his, the King's personal crime, he bears himself with ostentatious calm and forced indifference. Even when apparent danger confronts him, and Laertes returns from France to hear of the death of his father, whom he thinks the King has slain, and, breaking in the doors of the palace with an armed band, confronts him with the implied charge of his guilt, the King with magnificent composure waives him off, and gently rebukes the Queen for her solicitude for his safety:

"Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person;
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would."

And even when Laertes, carried away by a wild passion of mingled grief and vengeance cries back:

"To hell allegiance! vows to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation!"

the King, with the oily unction of a practiced hypocritic priest not only allays his spirit, but

wins him to his own uses and makes him an instrument by which to destroy the disquieted son of the murdered King, whom he has now learned to fear.

Thus to the very end of the play, till the moment that the rapier of the dying Hamlet is thrust unsuspectedly in his bosom, does this personage carry himself with the majestic sway of the pompous hypocrite, determined to triumph despite the opposition of earth or heaven, or all the mustering hosts of blackest hell. Shakespeare gives to him much prominence, oft is he the centre of the stage, his speeches are among the longest and the best in the drama, his wisdom not to be despised and his counsel not unfrequently most admirable.

He succeeds in clothing himself with a mantle of such majestic innocence and ennoblement, that even Hamlet himself is sometimes deceived and fears his suspicions have been improperly aroused. In a moment of extreme anguish when he feels confident of the King's guilt, and rebukes himself with bitter curses for being pigeon-livered and with lack of gall to make oppression bitter; he still doubts and fears that the

Ghost who informed him of the King's unholy deed may have been untrue.

"The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil; and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me, to damn me. I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

But even though he succeeds in catching the conscience of the King, and now knows that indeed he perpetrated the damnable deed, Hamlet is forced still to pause in the execution of his vengeance, on account of the King's noble bearing and the splendid assurance of his majestic hypocrisy. It seems to me this is one of the potent reasons why Hamlet so long postpones the deed upon which he is bent—the killing of the King—and can at last achieve it only on the sudden outburst of a tempestuous passion, even at the point of his own unhappy murder.

Hence the King to me stands as the embodiment of the bold, defiant, headstrong, consistent, unctious and commanding hypocrite. He is not only

the criminal executioner of a deed whose offence smells rank to heaven, but he is the proud possessor of a regal front which he displays with audacious temerity and pretentious importance. The supreme lesson which this symbolic character teaches is that however lofty and officious may be one who asumes to play the part of the hypocrite, though his reign may be successful it must needs be brief, and though for a time the god of peace may harbor and protect him, his end shall be miserable and his name an everlasting curse. No art can deceive, no charm allay, the evil deed that stamps its blight on the guilty soul. Try how hard he will the hypocrite knows that the deed will out, and no artist lives who can paint the black thing white, or convert its ghastly cheeks of guilt to roseate innocence. As he himself, self-accusing, cries:

"The harlot's cheek, beautified with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it,
Than is my deed to my most painted word."

Though Shakespeare has not said it, save by implication, we read into his lines the profound lesson that no man can triumph ultimately against

the laws of truth and right, and though he play the blatant hypocrite beneath the jewelled robes of royalty or the beggarly rags of poverty, the end is the same—deceit shall be defeated and justice reign at last.

Next we study Gertrude, the pitiable, weak and pliable Queen—who shall be for us the symbol of unamiable sinfulness by way of contrast with Ophelia, who shall become the symbol of chastest innocence, ensnared in the tangle of apparent sin and most ill-fated fortune. That even Hamlet himself believed his mother to have been wanton in her conduct and to have yielded to the blandishments of the "bloat King" to tempt her to incestuous indulgence, his language reveals all too plainly. He minces not, in that shocking scene where his words are as daggers and his inflections as the twisting of the weapon in the festering wound. When Gertrude, much offended at Hamlet's brash impertinence, exclaims, with labored innocence:

"What have I *done* that thou dare'st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?"

He responds with impetuous and cruel charge:

"Such an act
As blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there;"

When Gertrude, seemingly most shocked, shrieks out:

"Aye me, what act
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?"

Then Hamlet, mustering all the reserve force of his pent-up indignation, fearlessly exclaims: (as he points to tapestries that hung in the royal room at Elsinore whereon were inwoven the portraits of the Danish Kings):*

"Look, here, upon this picture and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on his brow:
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;

* "On the stage Hamlet is often made to wear a miniature portrait of his father round his neck, and to hold it up before his mother; but the words of the play prove incontestably that Shakespeare imagined life sized pictures hanging on the wall. Now we find a contemporary description of a "great chamber" at Kronsburg, written by an English traveller, in which occurs this passage: 'It is hanged with Tapistary of fresh colored silke without gold, wherein all the Danish kings are exprest in antique habits, according to their several times, with their arms and inscriptions, containing all their conquests and victories.'" ("William Shakespeare," by BRANDES, p. 358.)

A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man.
This *was* your husband. Look now what follows:
Here *is* your husband. Like a mildew'd cur,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor?

. . . . . .

O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax."

The mother, who with but weak and distressful lamentations can listen to such castigations from her horrified and unforgiving son, must indeed have been conscious of having sunk so deep in sin that reclamation is almost impossible. Whenever did a son so speak to a frightened mother as did this so called mad and frenzied Hamlet! Doubtless seldom has ever a son had such just and overpowering cause to propel him to hot and flaming words, and never did a sinful mother's heart snap with such sudden woe.

"O, Hamlet thou hast cleft my heart in twain"

groans the guilt-smitten and self-convicted Gertrude. Answers the heartless son:

"Throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half."

Here then in this ugly and repulsive matron, the mother of so pure and noble minded a son, we have the surprising contrast of all the wisdom, nobility and virtue in the youthful child, and all the frailty, chastelessness and guilt in the mature and elder parent.

Such domestic situations doubtless do arise in human experience and by implication Shakespeare here introduces a sharp question in Ethics, namely, whether an offspring has the right to act as censor and judge upon a parent, and convert the position of an underling into that of a superior. Here I discern a piece of refined and exquisite symbolism. The thought implied is that truth, virtue and purity ever hold authority within themselves. They know not the priority of age, or the superiority of relationship. The parent in judgment is he who is the wiser whether he be the engendered or the engendering. He is the older who knows the most, feels the deepest, discerns with keener clarity.

In the symbolic scene we are studying, undoubtedly the matron, "the hey-day of whose

blood" is tame and waits, supposedly, upon the judgment, must needs have been assumed, by age, to have been the wiser and the safer guide than her hot-headed and impetuous son. But 'tis not so. The youth of thirty, a schoolboy, unsophisticated, with "apprehension like a god," and an intuition that reveals the finer avenues of the heart to his researchful vision, is here the wiser, the older, the abler. And by the mere authority of his divine penetration and sense of impeccable purity he holds the right to chide, chastise, and castigate his guilty mother, with a tongue that stings like a scorpion's telson. So in life ever the noble mind, the unsullied heart, the stainless character, however young in years, speak the wisdom of the sage with towering force and convincing authority.

Gertrude stands then to us as the symbol of mature folly wearing the weeds of enforced widowhood. Wed, she is, yet unwed. Chaste in law but foul in morals; a matron who deflowers her own maternity, and damns the only offspring of a once noble and unsullied love. No more knows she the ecstasy of youthful passion, whose sense in her is "approplex'd", and what of love she still pos-

sesses is but its mockery and vain pretence—a painted flower, and a gilded beam. Such love young Hamlet rightly damned and proved its works as damnable as hell's.

And hard against this love,—this devil's instrument and strumpet's vanity—how artfully does our author introduce another, a deeper, holier, diviner love, too pure to abide unharmed in this veiled planet of inhuman sin, which lingers in our memory in painful contrast with the other! As Gertrude is the symbol of all that's vile and venomous in love, Ophelia, by contrast is the symbol of simple sweetness, purity, and most chaste affection. So gentle is her love, that like the timid fawn, it shies and flees if it be descried. So pure, the very dews of heaven are not more chaste, ere they descend to kiss the vulgar fields. Her thoughts are as unsullied as her marble brow; her passion as pure as her snowy bosom; her person as clean as the stainless lily. To her the tender and thoughtful warnings of her devoted brother, Laertes, are all needless, and she can but little comprehend them.

"For Hamlet and the trifling of his favor," he reminds her,

"Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
Think of it no more.

. . . . . .

If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity,
Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain.—
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister."

Lightly she laughs away these weighty cautions, these warnings of "contagious blastments most imminent," and with a kiss reminds him she "shall the effect of this good lesson keep, as watchman to her heart." Yet little has she thought to seek the dangerous "primrose path of dalliance," of which, in turn playfully she warns her brother, for so serious is her love, already it casts athwart her life the prophecy of its awful blight.

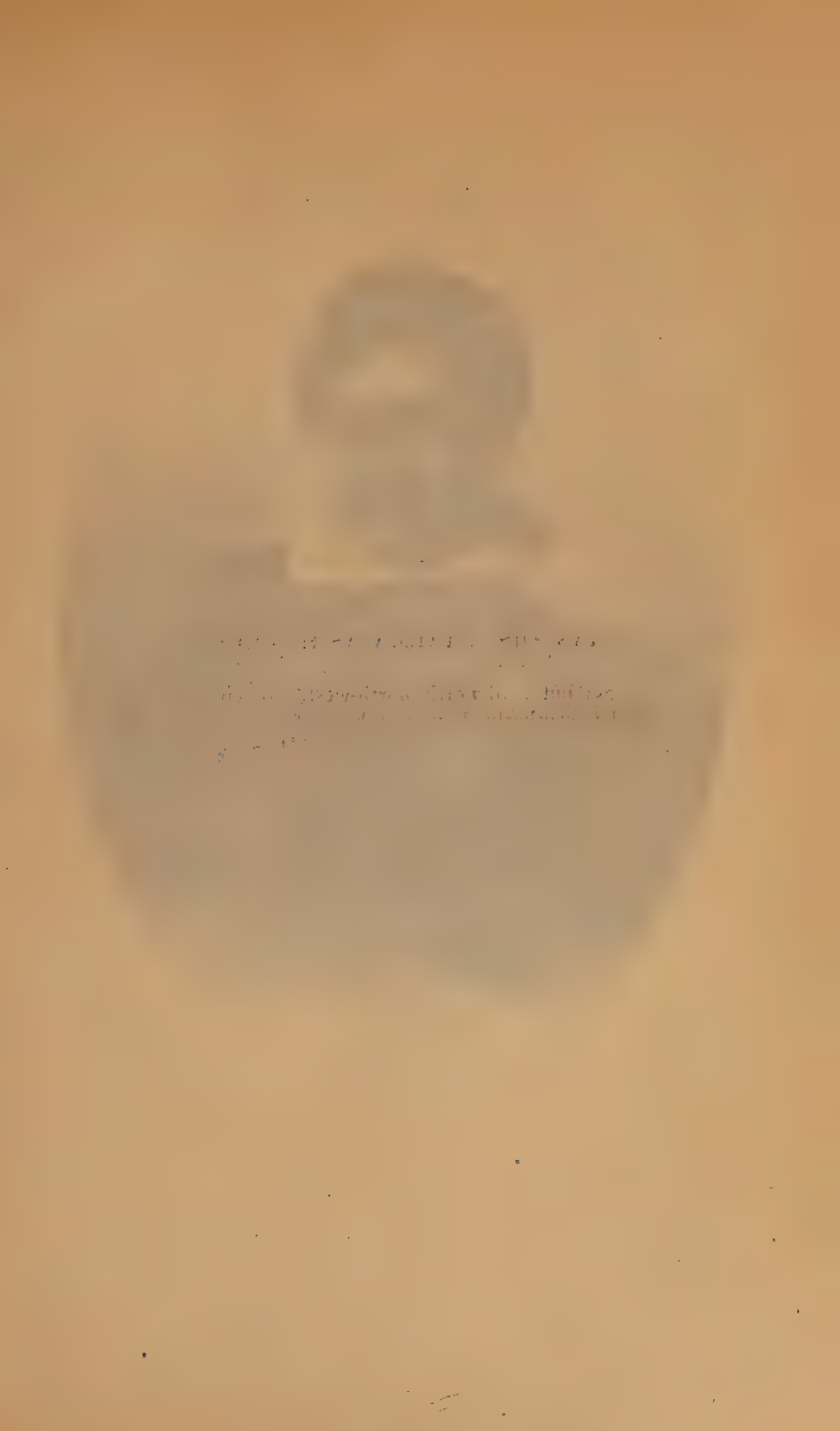
Although in the play she never, save by implication, confesses her love, we feel it in every line which she speaks, in every movement of her gliding figure. Her father chides her because she is wont to be so much with Lord Hamlet who, he believes, cannot love her honorably, on account of his high estate, and therefore naturally fears for her safety. But she confesses that Hamlet hath

of late made many tenders of his affection to her. "Affection! Pooh! you speak like a green girl," gruffly replies the foolish old man. She never, however, tells directly of her love for him, although it is plain that his overtures are most agreeable to her. "My lord," she replies to her anxious father, "he hath importuned me with love in honorable fashion, and hath given countenance to his speech, with almost all the holy vows of heaven."

It is all too evident that she loves him a thousand times more passionately than he loves her. Hers is a love that cannot be cast off, except at the sacrifice of her reason, for any cause. Her young and fragile frame is already woven into his sturdy figure, and unwittingly she is leaning absolutely on him. Like as the tendriled vine around the oak rises or falls with it, so must the gentle Ophelia seek alone her happiness in the brave and dauntless Hamlet. But if perchance he should ruthlessly cast her off, as in a passion one thrusts a timid bird from one's bosom which has sought refuge there in the passing storm, her fate would be as fatal as the bird's, and as mournful to behold!

We cannot contemplate this possibility with other feelings than those of utmost sorrow—aye of grief that smites the inner temple of the heart. That a child so lovely, pure and past all fault, confiding most unsuspiciously in one whom she most justly believed to be both truthful and strong, should in years so young meet the blastment of unrequited affection and be abusively rejected, could lead to naught but mental dethronement, or else, had she been stronger, to suicide. She had known the young Hamlet, while yet he was an indifferent and innocent student at college, who made ardent love to her while his mind was still free of trouble, perplexity, and the dismal melancholy of his vengeful mission.

He had not yet heard the revelation of the atrocious manner of his noble father's taking off. He had not yet seen the Ghost, nor had his brain been bewildered with the appalling and affrighting tale of that apparition's revelation. Love was natural to him. He had an open and an ardent heart; it yearned for responsive affection, for endearing love, and in the gentle Ophelia his mind discerned the reflection of his soul's ideal. What joy was here; what animate delight of prophetic



FRANCOIS J. TALMA AS HAMLET

I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a hand saw. Act II, Sc. II.

unity! But anon he is not the Hamlet that had been; the Hamlet of her faith and her love! All changed he comes, transformed from saint to devil, from sage to madman. What has befallen him. O mortal sight! O baneful curse! She tells her father thus:

"My lord as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd;
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd;
Ungarter'd and down-gyv'd to his ankle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horror — he comes to me."

The father assures her he is mad for love of her. But her keener intuition divines another purport in his mien. She believes indeed he must be mad, but the cause she cannot divine. What wonder the poor girl's brain begins to reel; what wonder already the foreshadow of her doom is discerned in her pale face and wandering eyes! Soon, Ophelia, the feigned madness of an actor shall become so real to you, that you shall know its nature as well as you know yourself.

Whatever may have been the cause or the necessity for Hamlet to have treated as he did the

innocent and most gentle Ophelia, how can we sympathize with him in the deed; nay, how can we forgive him? If he has conjured the idea in his brain, after his interview with the uncanny Ghost, that he must needs "put on an antic disposition" and bear himself most odd or strangely, in order that he may deceive the Court and all his friends by his assumed madness, we still must feel a keen rebuke for him because of his bitter treatment of the confiding child who loved him so, and can but wish that his mission might have ended without this blight. After the tormenting resolution has seized and flamed his soul that he must avenge his father's death by the death of the King, his slayer, coldly he accosts Ophelia, whom he meets:

"I did love you once."

"Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so."

"You should *not* have believed it; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it; I loved you not."

"I was the more deceived."

Surely Hamlet must have felt the effect of this blinding blow. He must have foreseen the dizzying state of mind it would have produced in her,

the mental nausea, the fainting anguish, the deadening stun. At this point, it seems to me, some remorse seizes him, and he would mollify his mean offense. Hence he begins to persuade her that the fruitage of their mutual love would bring naught but pain and disappointment to them, and that their offspring would so much reflect his own sinfulness, that she would regret the conjugal results. Therefore he pleads with her to go to a nunnery. "What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery!"

It is pitiful, tearful, heart-rending. Here is a mould of transparent marble, nay of frail and fragile china, suddenly smitten with a sturdy blow that shatters it into fragments, which never more can be cemented. All, all is lost to her; the world is dark; its angel of light has vanished; nothing now inhabits it but blackest devils and prophecies of evil. Her young heart pours out its piteous grief at sight of the dethronement of reason in her lord and master whom she so much honored and adored, mingled with the consciousness of her own blight and irredeemable despair.

"O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown"

mournfully she cries, thinking but of Hamlet.

"The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword;
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh!
O woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, to see what I see!"

But the anguish of all this is made double agony if we are forced to admit that the dethronement of reason which she beheld was only possible pretense, but which was so soon to become real and incurable in herself!

What more can be in store for the sweet Ophelia's ill-fated lot to deepen the darkness that encloses her? It seems to me that Shakespeare must have been most loath to have introduced her final state, and the immediate cause that led to it. That she should have lost her lover by a sudden blow of some most sinister fate, to her inscrutable, is

indeed evil enough. But that this lover should become not only lost to her, but also the murderer of her most honored father, was such a mountain of evil as to have broken down the frame of one far stronger than she. When at last with brain distraught, sunken and sallow cheeks and eyes all glassy, she comes again upon the stage singing her heart-piercing snatches of sweet song, we hear the double-mourning strains for father lost and lover gone:

> "He is dead and gone, lady,
> He is dead and gone.
> At his head a grass-green turf,
> At his heels a stone."

Surely at this sight of blasted sense and vacant brain—like the ruin of a noble structure, full of holes and windowless, through which the wanton wind resounds with mocking echoes—we feel like crying as did her horrified brother:

> "O! heat, dry up my brains; tears seven times salt
> Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eyes!"

The picture is complete; another touch is impossible. The artist leaves her in our memory clinging, as it were, to the reeling mast and rig-

ging of a tempest-tossed and foundered vessel, soon to be washed away by hungry waves which in mercy shall forever silence her aching heart.

But she lives ever in our minds as the symbol of unrequited and forgotten love, too pure, too ethereal and divine, to have inhabited this tabernacle of decaying clay. Ever thus has love, woven of the silken skies and silver stars, and incarnate in a mortal frame, come to grief on this gross planet. And we fear ever shall it be so till some happy epoch shall abide wherein both man and woman shall be so divinely moulded, neither shall outrage the other, nor find their purposes awry or cast in mutual conflict. That time must come, when this old planet shall have grown young and green again, and the sons of God, ethereal offsprings of the divine, shall be so pure, the daughters of the earth shall welcome them, without reproach or sense of wrong. Till that time the mournful Ophelia shall abide as the deathless symbol of love sacrificed on the altar of human disparity and mortal disappointment.

There are also other characters in the drama which stand boldly embossed upon the memory as

symbols of specific phases of human life which space fails us here to enumerate. Polonius, the aged temple of wisdom, wherein forever clangs the garrulous tongue of warning and advice, an endless bore, and yet adored, beloved of all, is symbolic of the truth that youth's experiences when crystallized in age become but vapory sentiment, unheeded by the young, monotonous to the old. Naught can teach but experience itself, and each one can attain to wisdom only through the beaten avenues of his long travelled heart.

We have, however, room for only one more symbolic character, and that the chiefest, the observed of all observers, the glass of fashion and the mould of form, the young and princely Hamlet. In order to apprehend the nature of this symbolization we must trace the lineaments of the character. First of all we perceive that Hamlet is the perfect type of the scholar—meditative, retrospective, studious, averse to society, living more in thought than deed, given to books rather than to men. And like many scholars, he is a cynic and a skeptic. But his cynicism is the outgrowth of his bitter experience, while his skepticism is the immediate result of his profound studies. He

has penetrated every avenue of thought, and sought out the far "reaches of the soul," that he may acquire knowledge from realms beyond the common approaches of the mind.

He is not, however, a dogmatic skeptic. He never pooh poohs or scoffs at another's claim to a knowledge of which he stands in ignorance. His skepticism is not like that of Horatio's, which is positive and cock-sure. When the latter was told of the appearances of the ghost, "tush, tush," he says, " 'twill not appear." When therefore Horatio did really see the spirit, we may imagine, having been so overwhelmlingly converted, he approaches Hamlet with much zeal; and Hamlet knowing him to be a friend and a scholar, therefore, perhaps without more opposition listened with some immediate credence to the amazing narrative. But we see how he struggles in his mind with the apparition. He cannot doubt that he has seen it, yet what it is, whether, as it purports to be, "the counterfeit presentment" of his father, come to reveal to him the awful story of his taking off, or the devil in pleasing form come to delude and torture him, or a mere figment of the mind, which projects itself as 'twere an

actual vision of the eye;—with all these phases of thought he struggles in profound meditation and conflict as only could a scholar of intense earnestness and large learning.

He is indeed so much the scholar,—the cold, incisive thinker; dwells so much in mental moods; that his emotional nature has become suppressed; his heart is buried in his head; his thoughts hold his feelings in a leash. This disposition affords him that self-control and poise which stands him in such good stead, through all the perilous roads of fortune he must needs travel. It gives him the courage to reproach and damn his mother with such resistless power that he forces confession from her lips and holds her like an abject slave at his heels. It steels his heart against the flaming passion he conceives for the beautiful Ophelia, and arms him for the cruel deed he feels necessity demands when with icy indifference he brushes her aside. By slow stages and persistent nursing it nerves him to the final purpose of his mission—the deed demanded by the Ghost, inspired by the love of his father, the hatred of the murderous King, and the welling fires of vengeance consuming all his being; till at last 'tis done, as would a

scholar, by a stroke of reason and self-possession in the very throe of death's embrace.

He has not only the wonted knowledge of the scholar but the wit, the instant repartee, the merciless logic, the supercilious consciousness of superiority. Who but a scholar, with such poise of mien and searching study could thus have addressed an apparition, which flashes on his vision "to harrow up his soul, freeze his young blood, make his two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres, and each particular hair to stand on end?"—

"What may this mean,
That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel,
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature
So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."

His entire bearing at this trying period of his experience is that of one who knowing his acquirement, and that it is superior to the common, is not averse to learn still more even of the most arcane and apparently incredible. He does not hesitate to remind Horatio, also deeply learned, that there are more things in heaven and earth

than are dreamed of in his philosophy. His wit fails him never. The aged Polonius bores him much, nevertheless he finds in him but a convenient opportunity for the playful disport of this wit, and makes the old man wonder at the nature of his madness. Polonius discovers Hamlet reading.—"What do you read, my lord."

Hamlet: Words, words, words.
Pol.: What is the *matter*, my lord?
Ham.: Between who?
Pol.: I mean the matter that you read, my lord.
Ham.: Slanders, sir, for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams; all of which, sir, I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have set it thus down; for yourself, sir, should be as old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.
Polonius: Though this be madness, there be method in it.

Thus ever does Hamlet easily play his part

with all, and in every event prove his superiority. But though easily he can thus play with and mock whom he will, his own soul is dark with forebodings and most cruel dread and disappointment. He confesses in a moment of confidence to Gilderstern, what, no doubt, he had come to regard as his fixed and unalterable state of mind, in these mournful words:

"I have of late, but wherefore I know not — lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory . . . .Man delights me not; no nor woman, neither."

Here we discern the sly encroachment of the pale cast of melancholy, which, indeed, is often the accompaniment of the student, but doubly effective in Hamlet, because of the canker that is gnawing at his vitals. His accustomed melancholy has now become so deep, and not at all assumed, that it lends a natural color to the theory of madness which all at court attach to him, and which he does not hesitate to encourage. But whether actually mad or not, this is evident, he has had cause enough for one of his frail and sen-

sitive mould to have made him mad, and if not mad has all the premonitions that point to its approach—the deep, irretrievable sorrow, the gloom and pessimism of despair, the force and fatality of a fixed idea, the sallow hue and sickly mind of melancholy.

What wonder when his soul is all distraught with the horrifying revelation of the Ghost, and the gruesome deed to which it has commissioned him, wondering whether the Ghost may have been the devil and outrageously deceived him, or in very fact his honored father, he finds a joyful relief in the thought that the production of a mimic play upon the Court stage, in imitation of the murder of his father, after the manner of the Ghost's narrative, will finally solve the problem. But even here in his tedious meditation, in his mournful and self-chiding introspection, we see the deeper springs of his character, and learn to read him better. He has invited the players to recite for him and they have done it so well, by summoning artificial and unwonted emotion to their aid, merely for the purposes of their mock art, that he feels his own shame for having a cause a thousand times intenser to stir his being

to its profoundest depths, and yet is still so laggard in duty, so impotent in feeling!

"O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd —
Tears in 'is eyes, distraction in 's aspect.
And all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba.
Yet I!
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peek
Like John-a-dreams unpregnant of my cause
And can say nothing."

Then, as by the maddening of his speech his spirit catches the contagion and his rebuke grows wild and furious, he reveals to us the cause of all this agitation. It is that he is comanded by a father's spirit to perform one of the most appalling and defiant deeds of which his times were capable. To kill a king was no common deed, cheap as death was in that age. For a king was "hedged about with divinity," his was a divine right, and he who rebelled against him rebelled against Deity, and

braved the chances not only of execution in this life but everlasting hell in the life to come. It is evident that it is most difficult for this meditative, philosophic, profoundly thoughtful scholar, to bring himself, soldier though he was, to the performance of a deed that required so much moral courage beyond the plain he was wont to inhabit. To rouse himself, he chides with all manner of personal abuse.

"O, what an ass am I! this is most brave
That I, the son of a dear father murther'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a wanton, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing, like a drab,
A scullion!"

We shall see that it is this mood that abides with him through all his suffering. He is so much the scholar, the man of thought, that it is most painful for him to become the man of action. He could easily have mustered others to the performance of the deed, and joyfully seen his uncle slain before his very eyes, and then gleefully have trampled on the carcass. But to do it himself seems to wreck his being, and make him shiver with an irresistible pause. What is it that holds him back? Is it

fear? Is it cowardice? Is it the thought of the cursing of an afterworld, "the dread of something after death, that puzzles the will?" I do not find in any of these the real cause of Hamlet's hesitancy.

It seems to me it is merely constitutional with him, to shirk in the performance of a deed so bounding with possibilities of unseen danger and future revenge. Not that he fears the revenge on himself, or any personal danger, but that the instinctive analyst and thinker cannot bring himself to the performance of so portentous a deed. For when he would act, the scholar stops to meditate, and "the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

We see this forcibly exemplified in the chapel scene where Hamlet suddenly overtakes the King, his uncle, at his prayers, and where in an instant the deed can be done and all the agony of his mental distress forever ended. Now had he been merely an impulsive passionate man, moved by the sudden fires of his soul, he would have been overjoyed at the opportunity and madly rushed upon the King, sword in hand, and thrust it through his bowels. But hear him:

"Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I'll do it."

It would seem that his courage has at last arrived and the act will be done upon the instant. But see how quickly the actor vanishes in the dreamer, resolution dissolves in contemplation. About to rush on him with his sword, he suddenly recalls a theological reason which makes him halt, and compels him to give vent to all his courage in a vapory soliloquy that gives his heated blood time to cool and disappoints the opportunity. He suddenly thinks if he slays the King at prayers he helps to save the King in the after life:

"And so he goes to heaven;
And so am I revenged."

Now none but a hesitant scholar would have trumped up such an excuse for the postponement of an act for whose opportunity he had been long awaiting. To me it is not a serious reason that Hamlet here presents for his failure to act. He simply cannot bring himself in cold blood to perform the hideous deed.

For his father's sake he would gladly do it; for duty's sake he feels that he must, for he has so

vowed and sworn. But for his own sake he hesitates, and, thinker that he is, so long as he has a chance to think but a moment of what he is about to do, he will recoil and waive away the opportunity. He can kill, and seem to feel but little affected by it, as in the unpremeditated murder of Polonius. But it must be in the sudden rush of blood to his head, and in a storm of passion that sweeps over his soul, forcing him to act on the instant and leaving not an instant for contemplation. This was indeed the manner by which he finally accomplished the fulfilment of his vow. He learns that the King, his detestable uncle, has been plotting against his life, and has made a compact with Laertes, whom he had thought an honorable contestant in a duel. The King has arranged with Laertes to use a poisoned weapon, and in the duel Laertes thrusts the venomed point into the flesh of Hamlet, but in so doing drops his foil, which to the King's amazement Hamlet seizes. Then Laertes, dying, reveals the secret and exposes the guilty trap of the King's plot; when Hamlet, himself dying, suddenly overwhelmed with a renewed consciousness of the damnable monster who sits on the throne, remembering his vow to his father's

spirit still unfulfilled, and now well knowing that if not done this instant it never will be, propelled by a sudden wave of fury, rushes on the King seated on his throne, and at last succeeds in doing that in which he had always failed when time was present to meditate upon the quality and horror of the deed.

Of what, then, does Hamlet, as a resplendent and universal symbol, ever remind us; with his noble speech, inculcating it—his lamentable life, its incarnation? It seems to me it is this:—The scholar has his mission; the patriot his. The one is made for thought, the other for action. The one is impetuous and rash, the other contemplative and calm. The patriot foreruns the scholar, the scholar conserves the patriot's fortune and success, and builds the stability of the nation.

Too commonly the patriot is the mere soldier, and with wild and irresistible spirit leads ever on to war, his trade, regardless of material or moral consequence. The mission of the scholar is ever to hold in check the impetuosity of the soldier. Blessed is that people whose soldiers are led by her scholars, and sad indeed that nation whose soldiers are her only guides.

We have even today much need of this true symbol of a most useful life. Courage is not always displayed in the mailed fist or the threatening sword. It is sometimes easy to whip, but to bear the after effects calls for even sterner courage than the initial step. It often requires more temerity to cause a nation to halt in its hasty course than to be ready to join the popular chorus and shout for victory on the battle-field. Hamlet well knew that he was much beloved by all the people, that his father had been most honored by them, and that he could in all probability persuade them that the revelation of the spirit was a truth—for that was an age that took kindly to ghostly apparitions—but with all this in his favor he persisted in his hesitancy, halted ever by his deeper thought, —his deeper motive sheathing his too eager sword.

With Hamlet our hearts must needs be sad; for we see in him the reflection of so much of the unhappiness of life, so often fated on those who are apparently so well fitted for fortunate and useful careers. He achieved no noble mission—his whole life was narrowed, cramped and cribbed, because of the duty of vengeance that was imposed on his too feeble soul. But what shall we

say of a "spirit" that carries with it into the after world such desire for vengeance and heaps the hideous duty on a sensitive and most noble soul? That is a question too horrible to contemplate. It is the age that alone must be blamed for such a reproachful and distressful fact.

Young Hamlet, symbolic victim of an epoch of gloomy superstition, represents to us the concrete consequence of a hell-conceived and cruel creed, responsible for the darkest periods of human history. This much we learn from this sad and mournful life: Vengeance is a deed the devil alone if he exist should covet, and none of us should be his willing agent in its foul accomplishment. Hamlet also stands for us the pitiable symbol of Vengeance personified—and in this woeful wreck of "a piece of work, noble in reason, infinite in faculty, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals," in this "quintescence of dust" that dissolves in "a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors," we discern the unhappy comment on a life given over to the achievement of one deed, in itself, appalling, in its results deplorable.

Hamlet, the scholar, the thinker, bearing with composure "the proud man's contumely," wear-

ing the fardels, to grunt and sweat under a weary life if need be, hoping sometime honorably to rise, quenching never the fires of aspiration and ascending hope, we cannot but admire, honor and adore.

It is this Hamlet, we should hold in mind as our model. Not the Hamlet of vengeance, breathing the spirit of murder, spurred by a phantom, maddened by a dream. This lesson the noble Hamlet teaches us, that when a sorrowful notion wanders into the mind, seizing it with such frenzy it occupies the place of reason, and sways the final sceptre of authority, it is our duty to rouse ourselves and drive it from the throne. Reason must ever be supreme and alone in power.

Hamlet's brain was twisted by a Ghost! His conscience was blighted by a maddening apparition that may have been the figment of the brain. His reason sank when his superstition rose. He allied himself with bloody monsters when once he suffered his mind to be occupied by the vacuous dreams of innocent deceivers. The next world must at least have a moral code as good as ours. If then a ghost, in fact or imagination, arises and commands us to execute a deed which violates the

moral code of this world, we know that such a ghost is unworthy our attention, and we should rather wish to enlighten it, than submit to its irrational and immoral words.

Here Hamlet the scholar failed to perform a duty to himself. His reason fled, his superstition won, because his heart ran away with his head, his passion with his peace of mind. Intelligence alone prevails. Truth alone conquers and establishes the happiness of life. Despite all foibles, spirits, the traps of feeling, or deceptions of the mind, we have learned from Hamlet this simple lesson, it is better to be true to one's self and the higher motives of the mind informed, than to be propelled by unschooled emotions, however dear they may be to the heart, or alluring with deceptive promise.

VII

THE ART AND MORALE OF THE PLAY

THE ART AND MORALE OF THE PLAY

IN presenting a few final conclusions concerning Shakespeare's Hamlet I desire especially to comment on the method of the art employed by the author and to study the question of how far the motif and denouement of the play are true to natural laws and human experience. Of course a playwright is allowed a considerable latitude in the manipulation of natural situations and logical sequences in the pursuance and evolution of his plot, and we are not justified in holding him too rigorously to the blunt and familiar facts of life. Nevertheless we are justified in criticising the author's scheme, once he has outlined it, and in commenting on his failure to attain a climax if he appear to.

Now, perhaps the most rational criticism to be made on this dramatic masterpiece is that although it delineates with such precision and accuracy the salient features of human life, and draws with such unerring truthfulness the evolution of a strong character under the pressure of most heart-rending and brutal events, nevertheless as a play, as a work of dramatic art, it is irregular, illogical,

the thread of the motif being several times lost in the incoherent scenes, and a climax at last attained which is apparently beyond the pale of the original intention, as indicated in the first scenes of the play.

In order to appreciate this criticism let me call attention to the fact that first, the Ghost is introduced as one of the most potent and important of all the springs with which the dramatist would move the machinery of his story. The advent of the Ghost is the occasion for the introduction of the plot and purpose of the play, and the pivot as it were on which revolves the character of the hero in its precarious and uncertain evolution. Through the first three acts the theory of the plot is that the office of the Ghost in the affairs of Hamlet has been such as to cause him to become utterly indifferent to all else in life save the carrying forward of the Ghost's commission and the successful consummation of vengeance on the reigning King.

Now from the first scene through three acts—from the advent of the Ghost to the furious interlocution between Hamlet and his mother in her boudoir—the story runs evenly and with increasing interest till the final climax is attained.

But at this juncture it will be observed there is a sudden and surprising halt or hesitancy in the progress of the plot, and the ultimate vengeance of Hamlet in the final act is achieved in a manner not at all indicated as a possibility in the preceding stages of the drama. It is quite evident that two climaxes are developed in the evolution of the play, the first of which is natural, logical and easily achieved; but the second is apparently an after thought, a sudden diversion, the author almost beginning the story over again and slowly working up to a startling and altogether surprising finale. In the first part of the play the Ghost is the *pièce de resistance*, all the theory of the action emanating from the revelations and injunctions which it delivers to Hamlet. From this juncture he casts away all previous purposes of life and begins his work anew.

"I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain."

This fact remains literally true until the climax at the close of third act. But then the motif, or at least its even unfoldment, seems suddenly to

lag, not to say retrogress. Hamlet after having secured all the palpable and absolute evidence he could require as to the guilt of the reigning King, and the unqualified truthfulness of the Ghost's story, instead of rushing on his victim, now that he had him in his power, halts, hesitates and falters, till his game has flown and his opportunity is lost. Then Hamlet goes off to England, and after his sudden and unexpected return, instead of setting out again on his mission of trapping and slaying the King, he allows himself to become involved in a fanciful and ridiculous altercation with Laertes, wherein, to please the whim of the King (his *bête noire* and especial object of hatred), he becomes wounded, and finally stabs his royal uncle not to avenge the death of his father or to fulfil the mission of the Ghost (which objects seem to have been lost sight of), but to punish him for the Queen's death and his own mortal wound.

We should not of course permit ourselves to overlook the fact that when his final passion of anger and vengeance was aroused, through the instigation of his own wound, the death of his mother and Laertes' revelation of the immediate

infamy of the King, that these new discoveries of the King's diabolical character could in his mind have combined with the horror already aroused in him by the information imparted by the Ghost, and thus together have piled up a mountain of evidence whose weight crushed him with conviction, and drove him to that act which heretofore he had never been able to accomplish.

But whether this be so or not, it is certainly a disappointment in his character that he was ever so slow and hesitant in performing a deed to which he was originally impelled by the discovery of his uncle's guilt—in his father's taking off—and must needs wait till personal injury be inflicted on himself, and death already hold him in its reeking clutch, before he can bring himself to act.

These are the two chief weaknesses and apparent inconsistencies of the performance. When a man, as strong physically and in moral courage as Hamlet, learns of the enormity of his uncle's crime, a person whom he already hates because of his hasty marriage with his too wanton mother, why should he so long hesitate in performing the deed to which he is impelled by both heaven and hell? Especially, after he has secured that very

evidence which he himself assures his confidant friend will be all sufficient to prove the King's guilt, and when he has the King in his very clutch and may, in the presence of the Court and in full justification of his deed, plunge the dagger in his breast, why does he still hesitate and falter?

He cries to Horatio after the King gave way under the scorching and all too insinuating allegory of the mock drama, and fled from his throne gasping for breath and crying for light—"I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound." And yet notwithstanding all this, he accomplishes nothing, but permits himself to be waylaid by the King's counter plot and to be exiled to England. This appears not only like a weakness in the character of the hero but more especially a serious weakness in the logical plot of play.

An artistic anomaly seems here to be introduced by the greatest dramatic artist of the ages. He makes a genuine climax nothing but an anti-climax. Undoubtedly never did an author more successfully and powerfully pass from the exordium to the peroration of a performance, than did Shakespeare in the evolution of this drama, from the advent of the Ghost to the triumph of the

EDWIN BOOTH AS HAMLET

Look you here, upon this picture and on this.
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.

Act III, Sc. IV.

mock play in the presence of the Court. But what an utter disappointment is it to the audience that, after all the slow and ponderous procedure of the heavy plot, after the continuous and unflagging emphasis of the interest of the play up to the very pith and marrow of its climax, suddenly, when the arm of vengeance is already lifted and the victim lies helpless beneath the blow, instead of striking, the hero dances madly in a frenzy of delight and lets his prey fly from him while he shouts:—

"Why let the strucken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch while some must sleep;
So runs the world away."

Surely, here is a break and disappointment in the plot. And it appears that it must have been such also to the author. For he does not again reach a similar height in the entire tragedy, but waits till the very last moment, and then, as by a sudden inspiration, sees a way out of his perplexity by conceiving that in a mere bloodless duel one of the contestants play false and thus make possible the final logical slaughter of the King.

It is perhaps audacious for one to criticise the art of so great a master; yet I do so not in any sense pretending to be the first to call attention to the matter, for it is an old criticism and has never been successfully answered. As far back as 1736 Sir Thomas Hanmer called attention to this weakness and incongruity in the art of Shakespeare, and ever since critics have been discussing it pro and con. Every sort of answer logical, illogical, fanciful and practical, has been forced into valiant service in defence of the author.

One of the most ingenious is that of a brilliant German critic, Klein, who insists that Hamlet's utter inability to act in final vengeance is to be attributed to the fact that he was unable to reveal to the populace the material proof of the King's guilt, and if he thus acted he would be thought to be but a madman and throw himself as a victim to the mob. This explanation to me seems, however, wholly unsatisfactory. In that age belief in ghosts was not as extraordinary and bizarre as it is in our own. The multitude of that age would easily credit a man of Hamlet's character and popularity, if he declared to them that he had seen a Ghost and that that Ghost had revealed to him

the enormous criminality of the reigning King. Besides, Hamlet had not himself only to depend on, but also his three staunch and fearless friends, who were soldiers of the realm, one of whom was especially noted for his scholarship and incredulity in such matters. But above all, there stands over against this theory the fact that the former King Hamlet was highly beloved of his people and his recent taking off was then bitterly mourned by them all. And in addition to this important fact is to be recounted the other, that young Hamlet himself was the cynosure and object of especial admiration throughout the land. This the King himself thoroughly appreciates and relates to Laertes: In answer to his question why he himself does not proceed against young Hamlet because he slew the Court's premier, the King answers:

"Why to a public count I do not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him."

He then intimates that the general gender (i. e. the people)—would overlook all his faults and prefer to believe his sins were his graces, his crimes his works of glory. The unpopularity of

the reigning King is also evidenced in the sudden insurrection which Laertes was able to arouse on his return from France. If Laertes who was an absent soldier with no claim to the throne could so easily stir public sympathy in his favor, how much more speedily and successfully could not Hamlet with such profound motives as stirred his soul? It seems to me therefore that such attempted explanations are as ridiculous as they are futile.

Unless we admit that Hamlet's character is inconsistently constructed by the author, I see no other explanation of Hamlet's inability to consummate the one chief purpose of his life, than what is to be attributed to his instinctive contemplativeness and mood of philosophical abstraction.

I wish however, here, to suggest another motive for Hamlet's persistent and apparently inconsistent hesitancy in executing vengeance on the King, which I do not remember to have seen anywhere else referred to. To me, it occurs, that Hamlet's intense love for his mother, and her reciprocal love for him, may have entered very largely into the cause of his so-called inaction. When the play opens it must not be forgotten

Hamlet is extremely angry with his mother. Before the scene in her closet, when he so mercilessly cauterises her heart with the acids of sarcasm and accusation, he would apparently as joyously have executed vengeance on her as on his uncle. But he has been enjoined by the Ghost not to harm her, and therefore he durst not. Nevertheless, until that scene he believed she was in complicity with the King in consummating his father's murder. The Ghost had neither affirmed nor denied this supposition. Hamlet was free to believe what he chose. Therefore in his angry outburst in the closet scene he directly accuses her of the guilt:

"A bloody deed! Almost as bad good mother,
As kill a King and marry with his brother!"

Nevertheless, before the scene is over they are completely reconciled, and never again in the play does he rail against his mother, but everywhere exhibits filial love and regard for her. When he is banished to England he thinks at once of his mother and bids her alone adieu, sarcastically avoiding the King. When the final duel is fought, the Queen shows Hamlet every attention of love

and tenderness, even disobeying the King by drinking from the cup Halmet had offered her,—against his royal will; and her son in all regards reciprocates the evident affection which prevails between them. This fact is more clearly brought out in the early edition of the play issued in 1603 wherein the Queen ends the unhappy scene in the closet by entering into a conspiracy with Hamlet to catch the King by strategy and thus uniting with him in final vengeance.

Here then it seems to me we discover something of a rational and natural reason for the hesitancy of Hamlet in punishing the King with death. The fact that Shakespeare cancels that portion of the original draft of the play in which he causes the Queen to join Hamlet in conspiracy against the King, would seem to indicate that Shakespeare himself had this thought in mind. For if the queen were in collusion with Hamlet to waylay and kill the King, then Hamlet need not hesitate to consummate the act at any time, lest he might cause the Queen such burden of grief, as might be too oppressive for her to endure. Therefore, apparently, Shakespeare altered this passage and merely permitted the Queen to become

reconciled with her son, but remain wholly ignorant of his designs against the King's life. This would leave a rational and logical reason for the postponement of Hamlet's deed of vengeance, lest he might break his mother's heart, who the Ghost had told him was weak and susceptible, and enjoined him to protect from injury and distress. If he avenge his murdered father on the King who is now his mother's husband, he must needs cause her grief and unendurable anguish. How then can he accomplish what the Ghost commands and still relieve his mother? How pursue the plan that has been revealed to him by supernatural powers and still save her such natural suffering as would follow the consummation of his mission?

This then becomes the crux of his problem, the stress of his life. What wonder he is perplexed, downcast, distracted and vacillating between two ways? True, the author does not anywhere show in the speeches or even the actions of Hamlet that this is the chief motive and cause of his hesitancy, and that around this puzzling problem revolves the entire mystery of the play. But it seems to me he makes his work the stronger by keeping this motive in the background and permitting the

reader's mind to be the more perplexed by undertaking to solve the problem. The fact that no student for these three hundred years has yet discovered a cause of sufficient force to satisfy the thinking world, why Hamlet's character is so inconsistent, proves how effective the supposed design of the author had been in kindling the curiosity of his readers and defying the acumen of his critics.

I cannot, therefore, but feel that there is something in the nature of genuine discovery in the theory I am now advancing, namely, that the real cause of the disappointing hesitancy of Hamlet was his filial affection and sincere devotion to his maternal parent. If this theory be accepted it adds another jewel to the crown of Hamlet's virtues, and must needs set him even higher on the pinnacle of our admiration. Having found that his mother was wholly deceived in the murder of his father, and was in no way involved in that foul deed, and that she married her second husband with sincere affection and was honorably bound to him by ties of conjugal obligation, he could not but have profoundly pitied her; and yet, while he must needs the less admire her seeing she still

clings to one whom she now knew was the murderer of her first husband, nevertheless, being his mother he could not but feel sorrowful for her in her sad extremity, and yield to an impulse to save her from all possible additional misery.

Therefore while he feels bound by the ties of sacred devotion to his unhappy father to consummate the commission of vengeance on which he has set out, still he so much pities his mother, and is so constantly conscious of the increased suffering it will bring upon her should he do what the Ghost has commanded, that he halts at every opportunity which presents itself, and sinks back into melancholy and contemplation without achievement.

This theory seems to me to be still more emphasized in the final denouement. Hamlet had permitted himself to be persuaded to play at swords to please the King; to parry with foils against Laertes merely to give the King some innocent pleasure. This act appeals to me almost like an absurdity. Why should Hamlet who has been lying awake nights and turning daylight into darkness in his soul by plotting instant vengeance on the King, his mortal enemy, now so suddenly turn

friend and sportive swordsman to tickle his royal fancy and afford him idle pastime? It would seem that Hamlet would scarcely lend himself to such a childish performance, especially merely to afford the King a chance to win a bet, unless he had some concealed design which he would hope to consummate in the incidents of the sport.

We may assume, however, that Hamlet permitted himself to be persuaded to this performance rather to gratify the pleasure of Laertes than that of the King. He had offended Laertes in a fit of passion which he sorely regretted. He therefore would fence in play with him and thus when opportunity afforded beg his pardon for his madman's act. Now up to this point there is nothing in the evolution of the drama to indicate how the final climax is to be reached. The grandeur of this act lies in its startling and unanticipated surprise. The entire plot is suddenly changed, and what has been scarcely more than a mournful drama heretofore, is instantly converted into realistic tragedy. How does the author achieve this coup!

While they are fencing some one cries out the Queen is fainting. Hamlet is already wounded

and he naturally suspects foul play. Then when the Queen exclaims that the drink has poisoned her and Laertes reveals the plot against his life, Hamlet's passion towers sublimely and in a trice he accomplishes that for which heretofore his life has been wasted in vain. What gives him his final courage and inspiration to action? Clearly, it seems to me, it is the fact that now he not only had double, yea treble cause, for fearless vengeance, but that the chief and immediate ground for his paltering inaction—his beloved mother—being now removed—he may without fearing to harm a hair of her head plunge his hungry dagger into the breast of the "murderous, lecherous King."

If we accept this theory it would seem to restore consistency and natural progress in the development of the plot, and remove one of the most perplexing problems which has ever confronted the students of literature. It will also elevate Hamlet in our minds as a noble son and an honorable gentleman; proving that much as he felt prompted to obey the command of a supernatural commission, he could not perform it while it brought pain to the already bleeding heart of his

beloved mother. But that so soon as tender consideration for her was unnecessary, he rises to the supreme command of his life, and without a thought of himself or his fate achieves what though most distasteful to his finer nature must be done by divine authority.

What then shall we say, in fine, as to the morale of the play? Is it ethical in spirit and does it inculcate a lofty purpose and inspiration in life? Of course its situations are so extraordinary and exceptional that its application can be only indirect to our age and to individual students. That it preaches a sublime moral truth cannot be questioned. Though it is a most gloomy and soul-benighting story; though it carries the reader into the outmost purlieus of human misery and individual criminality; though it deals with things most brutal, bloodthirsty and murderous; though its every character is besteeped in deepest fumes of foul concoctions from the nethermost hells of human life; yet its issues are wholesome and its preachments are pure.

Never has the enormity of crime been better exposed. Never has the sweeping searchlight of

earthly wisdom played more effectively upon the sea of human action, revealing its every motive and unveiling its profoundest secrets, than in this masterly piece of art. Evil, though for awhile triumphant and swayed with sceptred power, is soon o'erthrown and whelmed in agonizing defeat. Murder will out; sin will sometime lay naked on the rocks exposed to the gaze of all! No closet is large or deep enough, or buried low enough in any cellarage, to shut the skeleton from the eyes of day, or seclude it from human discovery. "Foul deeds shall rise though earth o'erwhelm them to men's eyes." This is the emphatic, persistent and unrelenting teaching of the play. Try how hard he will; though disguised in the royal gowns of kingly courts; though wearing the crown of authority, and swaying the power of state; the criminal shall at last be found, wrenched by the hands of justice from his throne and trampled to death beneath the feet of the avenging mob. And justice shall put its sword of vengeance even in the hand of love.

That, that men need most to woo them from human cares and earthly wretchedness, from the bitterness of affliction and the despair of misery, jus-

tice shall employ against the guilty. The heart, that was made for love and by nature responds with filial devotion, shall be made the chalice from which the criminal ingrate must needs quaff the poisoned liquor to his own damnation, that justice *and* love together may triumph and henceforth equally together reign. Such to my mind are the teachings of this morose and melancholy tragedy. It fits this age as any. For human nature is ever the same and human crime unchanged. Murder today is perhaps not as common as in the days of Hamlet; but the self-same spirit that prompted to murder—ambition, lust of power and illicit love—are today as strong in the avenues of life as ever. Their issue also today is the same.

He who sins against his own conscience suffers. He who darkens the light of truth in his own soul and chafes at the invitations of noble purpose and pure affection, must reap the harvest of self-delusion, and the dire vengeance of outraged justice, as certain as the night treads on the skirts of day, as death follows life. These are the palpable preachments of Shakespeare's mighty tragedy of Hamlet. Indeed the play is a sermon—a continuous preaching of one long sermon. So

true is this that as some of the French critics say it is a weakness in the playwright's art. The drama, however, itself preaches enough, so that if the long sermonistic soliloquies were extracted, the action is sufficiently serious, the individual suffering sufficiently intense, and the ensemble solemn enough, to impress the most indifferent with the palpable lessons the play imparts.

Only a great sufferer can be a great poet. The man who wrote this drama must have known either by experience or through intuition all the gamut of human passion, all the pangs of human ambition. His heart was the teacher of his head. His story was written in blood spilt from the veins of conscious misery. No man could depict the mental and moral agonies of such a character as Hamlet without having in some measure himself been the part. Either in this life or some other that history had been forewritten on the tablets of his experience, and were here set forth as memories to lighten the burden of his soul. Shakespeare indeed was Hamlet, Hamlet was Shakespeare. In some sense this must have been his biography. Therefore perhaps we love this

tragedy better than any other of his, because we feel instinctively that somehow it lets the light into his own life and affords us a faint glimpse of his profound, reclusive nature. To become acquainted with one such soul in this pilgrimage of earth is to have trod close to Parnassus and felt the touch of a god! How thankful must we be not only that he has lived but that his works remain behind. O enviable immortality, when thoughts become immortalized in words that shall abide as long as tongue has speech and a heart shall beat in human breast!

On page 230 I referred to the Quarto edition of Hamlet (1603) wherein it was plainly shown by Shakespeare that not only was he reconciled with the Queen but that she was privy to his plot to kill the King and had agreed to join him in his intrigue. As this fact is not known to the average reader of the current play it might be well to introduce the conversation between Hamlet and his mother as presented in that early edition. It follows the entrance of the Ghost when Hamlet is closeted with his mother:

QUEEN

Alas! it is the weakness of thy brain
Which makes thy tongue to blazon forth thy grief;
But as I have a soul I swear by Heaven,
I never knew of this most horrible murder.
But Hamlet, this is only phantasie,
And for my love forget thy idle fits.

HAMLET

Idle? No mother my pulse doth beat like yours;
It is not madness that possesseth Hamlet.
O mother if ever you did my dear father love,
Forebeare the adulterous bed tonight,
And win yourself by little as you may,
In time it may be that you will loath him quite;
And mother but assist me in revenge
And in his death your infamy shall die.

QUEEN

Hamlet, I vow by that Majesty,
That knows our thoughts and looks into our hearts,
I will conceal and do my best,
What stratagem soe'er thou shalt devise.

HAMLET

It is enough, mother; good night.

VIII

THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE AS A LIBERAL EDUCATION

THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE AS A LIBERAL EDUCATION

THE character of the mind is made by the company it keeps. Its powers unfold in accordance with the geniality of the atmosphere that environs it. If it move in the chilly air of unimpassioned thought and intellectual pursuit, its beams are like the nightly moon's, cold, flameless and reflective. The mind that thrives in the dry light of abstract speculation or abtruse reason will evermore reveal itself in expression lofty and aloof, welcome to those only who contemplate things far removed from ordinary human interest.

Such minds search out and find the truth in the recondite recesses of nature, and reveal her, naked and ungarnished, to the wondering eyes of men. Such minds determine to discover and divulge the truth at whatever cost of feeling, sensibility or pain, that men may *know*, though knowledge bewilder and confound them. Such minds are heartless though potent; irresistible and relentless. These are the scientists, the physicists, the profound and persistent travellers on the highway of knowledge, around whom ever shines the icy radi-

ance of intellectual glory, far reaching, penetrating and electric.

He who bathes his mind in their atmosphere, like them is swathed with light, light that falls as from reflecting icicles, pendant in the frozen air. Clear, crisp and penetrating as the wintry wind is each thought that emanates from such source, and cast in icy moulds. Here dwells not the poet, philosopher, dreamer. In such an arctic zone are found no pictures of the imagination, no tropes of poesy, no metaphors of phantasy. All must be cold, colorless and faithful to fact. Fancy has here no play; for fancy though pleasing to the soul, oft misleads the mind through error's devious paths.

Such minds are necessarily equipped with but a limited vocabulary; for their modes of expression are restricted and somewhat stereotyped. They dwell much in technical terms which can be used but little in other applications. They have no need to study the fine and sometimes fanciful shades of difference that are found between words of close resemblance, in which the poet's muse discerns the flitting feelings of the heart caught in momentary expression. To the cold intellectual

mind each word can have but one meaning, self-same and everlasting. He reads the stars in their several relations, expressed with mathematical exactitude, and plies his minute measuring rod to the uttermost parts of the infinite, merely that he may set down and note in figures, of illimitible proportions, the results of his research. He pursues history for dates, events, and the boundless summary of human vicissitude, storing his brain with mummified memories and fossilized relics of human lives.

To him history is merely a tabulated record of events; the planet but a stage for the enactment of transitory scenes; life itself but the result of interacting forces whose laws are determinable, whose existence is ephemeral. Vast are the achievements of such for they are in constant communion with nature and are dragging from her inmost depths the secrets long concealed from human view. They are the builders, whose labor is confined to laying the firm foundation, and rearing the substantial temple of human culture; but it must remain for others to complete and decorate the inner walls, to cover the canopied ceiling with gorgeous frescoes, to hang the silken draper-

ies, arrange the rich and massive furniture, and set the resplendent statuary as delicate taste and refined sentiment may demand.

Then, other minds are there whose contemplative moods dissolve each golden beam of light into its several rays, studying each apart, yet in such manner as to recognize the inseparable union of them all. To such there is nothing single or discrete in nature; her infinite variety is but the changing expression of her perfect unity; unbroken in its essence; illusive in manifestation. He alone sees with the Inward Eye, through whose lens the transitory and confusing phenomena of the outward world converge in a single consciousness, emblematic of the Oneness of Being in which all things abide. His is the mind of the philosopher, the metaphysician, the poet-thinker, the rational dreamer. Language is to him not the vehicle of what he beholds with the eye of flesh, but what reason reveals to him in self-analysis and spiritual contemplation. His speech is not so labelled that each word stands out, of itself, self-explanatory and intelligible to the unlettered mind. His words are not facts, events, or commonplaces of the world's affairs. They are sym-

bols, darkly indicative of recondite meanings, which alone the mind prepared can penetrate and comprehend.

As rare, and undiscovered ores, for ages buried in the bowels of the earth, have ages since scattered their symptoms athwart the soil, which oft the rude and plodding mountaineer has, unnoticed, smote beneath his heel, but which to the tutored mind reveal a world of unimagined wealth; so, from the unfathomed depths of his profound research, the contemplative philosopher spreads here and there a symptom—an intimation—of his knowledge, which but sympathetic minds can grasp, and to the unprepared are meaningless as broken snatches of forgotten songs. His speeches are dark, his sayings cast in similitudes which only those can grasp who walk in the light that he beholds.

Language is like the spectral boundaries of luminous bodies. They reflect the exact form and image of the visible orb, but so vague that only the practiced eye can discern them. Yet when once beheld they add lustre to the figure, and stability, by their presence. Hence they who dwell upon the promontories of human contemplation,

who absorb the rarified atmosphere of intellectual mountain heights, and stretch their vision far down the reaches of the infinite, speak in language that the common plodder cannot apprehend, and which to the untutored mind seems unintelligible and meaningless.

But would we reach up and grasp the stars, balance the worlds of matter in the scales of judgment, trace the everlasting trend of impalpable forces, and discern the thread of reason in the fabric of existence, we must abide where dwells the philosopher, who, with large comprehension and rational analysis, assembles and compares the congeries of events that constitute the completeness of the vast Existent.

With him our culture widens beyond the narrow compass of the mere student of phenomena, who connotes not the universal meaning, but studies nature only in her visible and variant forms. A strange flower to the botanist is of rare and gratifying value, for it gives him occasion for the analysis of its several parts and its proper classification in the herbaria of nature. Carefully does he survey its petalled corolla, its stamen and calyx, note its configuration, observe its distin-

guishing features, and at length with great glee, determine to what class, order, species and family it may belong, rejoicing that he has stolen a secret from nature, and achieved a scientific triumph.

But not with such restricted contemplation does the philosopher gaze upon the humble flower at his feet. To him there is woven within the web of that simple life all the forces that penetrate the boundless infinite, so that it conveys to him the light of the sun in its resplendent hues; its chemic essence reveals to him the unity of the constituent universe; its fragrance is the palpitation of the circumambient air that effects not alone his senses, but penetrates the outermost regions of sympathetic nature; and its bowing welcome, in the blowing wind, speaks to him of the common bond of fellowship that holds all things together and as one in the immensity of space. The flowers,—as well as every other fact or feature of nature,—are then to him not discrete forms of matter which he needs must contemplate with a cold and distant eye; but each single specimen becomes his companion, friend and fellow, that whispers to his soul the cryptic secret of the natural world.

Close of kin with the contemplative philosopher stands the poet, discerner of the immanent wisdom of nature, and magician of language, who with the witchery of words weaves a world of his own, peopled with figments of the mind and fairies of the imagination. The poet lives most near to nature, for his heart, like the Aeolian harp, responds to the slightest touch of impalpable forces. Oft he knows not what he sings, for his lyre is swept by unseen hands and his lips respond with spontaneous speech. He dwells upon vertiginious heights, where flitting clouds wrap their fleecy mantle round his form, and lingering sunsets pause to paint his coronet upon the westering skies. The heavens are his only canopy, and they oft vanish into impalpable nothingness, as his far seeing eye penetrates the infinite.

Time waits not for him nor he for time. He sweeps in consciousness beyond all limitation, and balances his feet on the horizon of eternity. The vast and ever present *now* embosoms him, and like a body in a vacuum he floats light as the airless void that holds him. His feet walk not the earth, nor yet do his hands touch the stars. He is beyond approachable substance; to him all forms

are but vanishing visions, the wandering phantoms of an endless dream,—strange and flitting visitants from a world of fancy and imagination. Like bubbles that burst in air, when thin and radiant with glory, the things to him most beautiful are the most evanescent; for they are but the fragile forms of flitting fancy, shattered in an instant by cold, obtrusive reason. He cannot gaze long upon his figured phantasies. They are shy and coy, timid and smote with fear. Like curious children, they will aproach and look deep down into his soul with wonder and amazement, but soon as discovered and embraced they shrink and vanish from his presence.

The poet utters not the language of the clod, but the voicings of the wind. He speaks not with heavy words that walk with feet of clay, but with airy syllables whose fluttering wings disport unwonted colorings in their flight. To him the commonplaces of the world are not stale, flat and unprofitable; for he sees them with other eyes than ours and detects therein such unsuspected force and sentiment, as none but he imagines.

To every man, for instance, the rising and the setting of the sun is so ordinary that only on un-

usual appearances does it awaken extraordinary appreciation. Among most men such scenes are spoken of in simple language without hidden meaning or suggestive sentiment. But not so the poet. To him the dim appearance of the dawn bespeaks a spiritual significance—the vague personification of an idea. As thus:

> "But look, the morn in russet clad,
> Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill."

Or thus:

> "Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops."

Such language to the untutored rustic is jargon and absurd. He cannot understand how the morn can walk, or clothe itself with a mantle, nor has he ever witnessed other candles than those of tallow, nor seen the toes of day, jocund or otherwise, and can but little imagine how they can stand upon the misty mountain tops. To understand the poet the mind must have room for similes, startling contrasts, and anthropomorphic myth.

He who seeks to restrain the poet to the ordinary and natural meaning of his words soon

learns that for him the poet has no meaning at all. He is reckless of common sentiment, and knows but little of the language of the streets. To walk with him one must wear such high-heeled boots his strides shall measure seventy times seven leagues, and continents become as mole-hills. One must not hope to capture the poet by clipping his wings. If the poet descend to earth his inspiration vanishes and he is like one of us.

The gods must ever remain on Olympus; genius must not descend from Parnassus; familiarity breeds contempt. Once we undeify them and disclose their mere humanity, they cease to be objects of worship, and become the butt of ridicule, the target of embittered scorn. To find the poet you must lose the man. He lives in other worlds than ours; and should we seek him in his haunts, his splendor would bedim our vision and dethrone our reason. His is a world himself has made, and such as only its creators can enjoy. For mortals of the common clay such lofty heights and diaphanous air unsettle the senses and emasculate the mind.

We never know how ignorant we are till we enter the company of the poets. All things that

heretofore we knew become as strangers bewildering us with their unwonted robes. We hear him using our accustomed words but set in such strange company and comport, they appear as different as the stone the lapidary sets, from what it was before his magic art adorned it. For whatsoe'er the poet sees is overcast with sheen of golden mist, describing which he must needs use such golden words as fit the golden thought. He sings not what he sees but what he feels; not what the eye discerns but what the heart explores. His intuitions are his deities whose voicings are his inspiration. They furnish him the breastplate of defense, the armor of defiance and the sword of truth. With these he ventures forth the consecrated Knight, to fight the battles of his mistress, Love, nor falters till his lance is broken, and even then retreats but to sally forth again newly armored for the fray. For,

"The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above;
Dower'd with hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of Love.

"And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
The winged shafts of truth,

EDWARD H. SOTHERN AS HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounce it to you. Act III, Sc. II.

To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring
Of hope and youth."

Hence the study of the poets is not vain and worthless. It is not to listen merely to the rapturous strains of melody that please the ear; nor to pursue the trackless wanderings of his created figments. The poet lives, 'tis true, in dreams; his scenes and characters are all but airy nothings; his story is unvarnished fiction; his motif transcendental and ideal. His feet rest not long enough upon the earth for him so to acquaint himself with human forms that he can distinguish between the mundane and celestial, between what is of the earth earthy and what but gauzy spirit.

Nevertheless his prophecy is irrevocable; his utterances are the very heart of truth. Poets have ever sung the truth before purblind philosophers discerned it. Statesmen and pedagogues must resort to the poet's haunts ere their conclusions can be trusted; to hear what say the gods before the halting speech of man is ventured. In the great crises of the world the poets have ever led the heroes of action; they are the forerunners of achievement.

Among the poets we find many surprising illustrations of this fact. Edmund Spenser, the great poet of the 16th century, composed a satire on the rising socialism of his day, and in a remarkable drama foretold the disapointment that would befall those who dreamed of human equality. He portrays a great giant come to earth who promises to readjust the relations that exist between men, so that none would have but his rightful share and none more than the other.

"Therefore the vulgar did about him flock,
And cluster thick about his leasings vain,
Like foolish flies about a honey-cock,
In hope by him, great benefit to gain,
And uncontrolled freedom to obtain."

Of course he shows how universal disappointment and dismay followed these glittering promises, and almost two centuries before the French Revolution foretold how the end would be futile.

"Like as a ship whom cruel tempest drives
Upon a rock with horrible dismay,
Her shattered ribs in thousand pieces rives,
And, spoiling all her gears and goodly ray,
Does make herself misfortune's piteous prey;
So down the Cliff the wretched Giant tumbled;

His battered balances in pieces lay,
His timbered bones all broken, rudely rumbled;—
So was the high-aspiring with huge ruin humbled."

"In old Rome and Greece the Poet was regarded as a species of Prophet and called by the same name; both were held alike divinely inspired; but there are not many unveilings of the distant future in poetry so remarkable as this anticipation and refatution of the Liberty and Equality philosophism of the eighteenth century in the end of the sixteenth," says an able commentator referring to Spenser's "Faery Queen," from which I have quoted. And yet this example is not altogether unique; for because of the poet's spiritual prevision he is by instinct prophetic in his utterance.

Every great epoch of human history engenders its swarm of inspiring singers whose prophesies forestall the swelling tides of action. Like as the morning songsters assemble to waken and welcome the golden sun, rising in the roseate dawn, and will not rest till he has cast his radiant beams athwart the horizon, so have ever the poets been thrilled with prophetic emotion by the intimation of approaching upheavals in human progress, nor stilled their voices till hope was swal-

lowed up in victory. Who shall ever say how much the songful tunes of the poets have urged humanity to achievement along the higher grades of life? Who shall deny that when mankind has sometimes been on the verge of degeneracy, when the sublimer intimations of the spirit had been dimmed by the gross ambitions of the baser self, the cry of the poet has often awakened them and stirred their hearts to higher things! How often has the poet roused the flames of patriotism in the human heart, to fight alas! sometimes for vengeance and crass conquest, but more often for justice, right and truth! How often has he foreseen

"The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire"

and called to those of dull eye who could not see that

"It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;"

till they were roused from their lethargy, and the hosts of right wrested, from "the deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress" of wrong, their weapons of defence! How shall we ever know how deeply these tender words of dear Bobby

Burns sank into the human breast and found expression in the later Industrial Revolution that swept the English Isles and forestalled the glories of our own democracy?

"See yonder poor, o'erlabor'd wight,
So abject, mean and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn!"

And these words are even to-day a picture of the wants and wrongs of our age and still inspire humane and philanthropic hearts to agitate for justice to mankind.

Thus we find in all ages poets have ever been the forerunners and inspirers of human action, reformation and achievement.

However, most poets have been able to round out for themselves but a single sphere of action; their sympathies have been circumscribed within the limits of narrow fellowship or national bias; they have seen the outer world from their own limited experiences and tragic lives; and while

they have touched all hearts more or less because of the native kinship of human souls and the similarity of human passions, yet but few have lost themselves in the universal soul of humanity and imaged forth the infinite variety of human character.

It may be truly said without exaggeration that but one poet in all the world, whatever time or clime we contemplate, has attained to so high a spiritual and intellectual promontory in the ascent of his genius, that he alone is the cynosure of centuries—the observed of all observers. We cannot imagine a period in the world's history when the sentiments, if not the language, of Shakespeare would not find a lodging place in the human heart. Like Paul in religion, he in literature is all things to all men. He is so cosmopolitan in thought that no place, period or people exclusively can claim him.

He is so universal in individual experience and character, that he speaks as naturally the words of the loftiest as of the base, the concepts of the philosopher as the falterings of the fool. He can rave with the thunders of the titan or charm with the lispings of the cooing babe. He has so com-

pletely run the gamut of all human passions, purposes and proclivities, that it seems impossible to conceive a character which he has not foreseen. With a single sweep of his pen Shakespeare furnishes the mind with a whole gallery of art. To read him is not merely to read rare and meaningful words, but to have one's mind suddenly filled with a wild and gorgeous tangle of flowers, interlacing shrubbery, variously tinted plants and a thousand unnameable growths, indigenous to him alone. He seldom speaks in direct and simple language. He utters every thought in simile and metaphor; casting on the mind not the mere form of words, but picturesque and unwonted images.

Shakespeare does not write, he paints; he does not speak, he sings; he does not converse, he orates. His moods are always extreme, his language ever vehement and fraught with passion. In the opening scene of the Merchant of Venice, where Salarino, Salanio and Antonio converse, mark the interplay of imaginary pictures that pass indifferently between them as if their words were the most commonplace. Salanio taunting Antonio reminds him that had he "such a venture forth" as has Antonio

"He would be still
Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind,
Peering in maps for ports, and piers and roads,"

and so on, when Salarino seizing the thought continues it with this extravagant imagery: —

"My wind cooling my broth
Would blow me into an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,
But I should think of shallows and of flats,
And see my wealthy Andrew docked in sand,
Veiling her high top lower than her ribs,
To kiss her burial. Should I go to church,
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
And in a word, but even now worth this,
And now worth nothing."

In this one passage we find more than a dozen mental pictures thrown in by way of illustrating the ordinary idea that where one deals much with the ocean and ventures to traffic with far countries over the seas he must needs be constantly anxious as to his material welfare.

It matters but little to this spontaneous poet how common and monotonous be the experiences he may be describing, he sees them so differently than others do, that when they have been pictured by his pen we needs must feel that they are not what we had previously thought them.

Take this thought, that sometimes Ambition will rouse one of humble spirit to such achievement as to convert him from humility to overbearing egotism. But now when Shakespeare says it on the tongue of Brutus see how altogether different it sounds:

> "'Tis a common proof
> That lowliness is young Ambition's ladder,
> Whereto the climber-upwards turns his face;
> But when he once attains the upmost round,
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend."

But of what advantage it may be asked is it to the ordinary man to read such language, or as some would say such circulocution, such redundancy?

First of all, the advantage lies in the broadening of the mind's horizon. For, language is the

symbol of mental growth,—the vehicle of thought —and where the vocabulary is limited and confined, the state of the mind is likewise. Shakespeare has the most complete and extensive vocabulary of any writer in the English language. Therefore his information is the most extensive and various of any one mind in all our history. Knowledge seemed to have come to him intuitively. But knowledge came on the wings of words, and it was because of his fluent mind which lent fluency to his language, that his information became so comprehensive and extensive. A vast vocabulary need be feared by none. All one need fear who is possessed of many words is that he be devoid of judgment. Outwardly, the only difference to be detected between a fool and a philosopher is that the philosopher knows how to use the words consistently, which the fool uses incoherently. It is not the fool's vocabulary that interferes with his logic, but his want of logic that trips up his vocabulary.

By way of illustration of this point let us contrast a soliloquy of Launcelot Gobbo with one of Hamlet's. In the soliloquies I am about to quote it will be observed that the theme is the authority

and regnancy of conscience. In both cases it is shown that conscience makes cowards of those who pause to enquire of its oracles when the impulse of the heart prompts to some important but dangerous venture. In the one case the fool speaks, in the other the philosopher. Thus Launcelot Gobbo:

"Certainly, my conscience will serve me to run away from this Jew my master. The fiend is at my elbow and tempts me, saying to me, 'Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,' or 'Good Gobbo,' or 'Good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away.' My Conscience says, 'No, take heed, honest Launcelot,' or as aforesaid, 'honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels.' Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: 'Via,' says the fiend, 'away' says the fiend; 'for heaven's sake rouse up a brave mind,' says the fiend, 'and run.' Well, my Conscience hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, 'My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son'—or rather an honest woman's son—well, my Conscience says 'Launcelot, budge not.' 'Budge!' says the fiend. 'Budge not' says my conscience. 'Conscience' say I, 'you

counsel well;' 'Fiend,' say I, 'you counsel well. To be ruled by my conscience I should stay with the Jew my master, who God bless the mark, is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation; and, in my conscience, my conscience is a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel. I will run fiend; my heels are at your commandment; I will run."

Here we find all the marks of the fool: garrulousness, circumlocution, indecisiveness, unconscious humor, paucity of ideas accompanied with frequent repetition, and quivering vacillation. It is an absurd speech for a wise man to make, but a wise speech for a fool to utter. That is, if Shakespeare had put wise language into the mouth of the fool he would have destroyed his fool and made him a philosopher. But while, in point of fact, his fool is discussing a most philosophical problem, he discusses it, thanks to Shakespeare, as a fool and not as a philosopher. It is in such touches as this, revealing his intuitive un-

derstanding of human nature, that Shakespeare discloses his genius. Now we will hear him discuss this same problem through the lips of one of the profoundest philosophers in all literature, whom he himself has created—the sad and melancholy Dane.

"To be or not to be — that is the question; —
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or, to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? . . . .
Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear the ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action."

Thus in each character of Shakespeare's the thought consistently expresses the natural mental

mode. They are all so clean cut and perfectly carved that we would recognize them in the street should we confront them. It is true these characters do not speak the language we use, and they all employ what we would today call a stilted and exaggerated phraseology. But that is because in the first place the language is that of the Elizabethan days of English literature and in the second place it is cast in the mould of blank verse. This verse forces a fullness, and sometimes even a redundancy of expression. There are many passages in Shakespeare which are almost incomprehensible because the idea is threshed over so many times in the same sentence, and in such confusing variety as to dim instead of clarify the perception of the reader. As for instance this passage in Hamlet, where he is discussing the accidents of birth that sometimes cause innocent people to suffer on account of a single weakness which foils otherwise an altogether noble character.

"So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth — wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin —
By the overgrowth of some complexion,

Oft breaking down the pales and fortes of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausive manners, that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star, —
Their virtues else — be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo —
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault."

Now that is certainly a very long-drawn-out, much confused and involved sentence, to state the simple truth that men's natures are largely complexioned by heredity, or that one weak spot in the foundation sometimes causes the entire structure to crumble. While this seems to be a fault in style, that would prove positively fatal to any imitator, in Shakespeare it seems to be almost a virtue, because it forces the student to attentive application, while he seeks to unravel the imagery and discover the concealed thought. Indeed the rumbling words of Shakespeare, even though they themselves seem senseless, take on such exquisite form and melody, that one must love them for the very sound.

Who can question that the study of such a master of language is itself a liberal education? But

when we couple with this that he touches every phase and fact of human life, almost all the chief events of history, almost every quality of individual character; that there is no problem of philosophy which he passes by without discussion, scarcely an occupation of man on which he does not dilate, or a science with which he is unacquainted, a system or ceremony of religion, a symbol of mythology or an arcane deliverance of mysticism, of which he does not reveal at least some knowledge; we appreciate the vast extent of his information, which with such diligence and eloquence he imparts to his readers.

In Shakespeare's plays we learn the value of all the cardinal virtues: Kindness, Humanity, Friendship, the policy of Honesty, the power of Truth. We learn the vanity of Ambition, Pride and Envy, the baseness of Ingratitude, the hollowness of Selfishness, the vileness of Calumny, the mockery of the Hypocrite's role, the poison of Jealousy, the wantonness and waste of vain Indulgence. He is the profoundest of philosophers and the solemnest of preachers; he is the most far-reaching and prophetic of statesmen, the soberest ruler of nations and the sanest guide of individu-

als. He teaches the loftiest morals by presenting the noblest exemplars of character, and, by contrast, the hollowness and worthlessness of ignoble and dishonorable lives. And yet he presents all sides and phases of life and thought, giving us the whole panorama of human existence without malice or attenuation.

To know Shakespeare you must know life; and if you are ignorant of life, after you have read Shakespeare you shall indeed know it. If you had experienced a thousand lives you could have learned but little more than this magician of the mind could teach. Not that he instructs you purposely and by rote as in a text book. But he teaches by innuendo, by the incarnation of an idea in a character, by the motif of a play, by simile, metaphor, comparison and contrast. In the story of Macbeth you have the whole philosophy of Occultism, all its dangers, its degenerate influence on the mind and soul of its blind followers, as well as the gross superstition that it inculcates.

In Hamlet you have a treatise of philosophical skepticism, the wreck of a mind thrust by cruel fate upon a venture that overthrows all its posi-

tiveness and optimism, and turns the world into a cavern of insane broodings and despairing melancholy. In Richard III. you have the portrayal of the enormity of self-seeking ambition and the utter worthlessness of religion founded on pretense and hypocrisy. In Lear you have the misfortune of a father's misplaced devotion, the outrage and criminality of ingratitude, and the dethronement of reason from a mind supported by a heart too ardent and trustful of its fellow men. You have, too a mind made mad by egomania. Lear is not all to be pitied, for he was himself his own worst enemy.

But while, as I have said, Shakespeare is indirectly the greatest of all preachers and teachers, he is such the most unconsciously of all men. The last thought, doubtless, that entered the mind of this great creator, was that of posing as an instructor of mankind, as a teacher of morals, as an expounder of religion or philosophy. Nevertheless he achieves the same result although he apparently aims at nothing of the kind. He is an artist, a portrait painter, a perfect and most skilful sculptor. He reproduces the world that he finds without any thought of attempting to make

it any better or any worse. But we who read our lessons into the magic creations of this master draw, if we are wise, the profoundest conclusions to our advantage.

While Shakespeare portrays for us the noblest characters he can find in the empyrean of his imagination, he does not hesitate to portray also the meanest, most abject and detestable. His is a world full of variety and contrast. He emphasizes the beauty and ugliness of character by presenting the opposites in contrasts so strong both are exaggerated by way of illustration. He throws just as much genius into the creation of a most detestable and monstrous character as into that of the most noble and sublime. His genius toils no more for the production of a Prospero, the very idealization of human and divine nobility, than for that of a Caliban, the basest and most offensive of bestial humanity. And yet, withal, in the mere depictment of those two characters he preaches the tremendous truth that the force of mental energy and clarity of thought will always overpower and control mere muscular capacity and mental stupidity. Hear what says Prospero:

PROSPERO

Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill. I pitying thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other:

CALIBAN

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you
For learning me your language.

PROSPERO

Hag-seed hence,
Fetch us in fuel; and be quick, thou'rt best
To answer other business.
If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar,
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.

Here we discern the play of the high art of mental power displayed over vulgar muscle and physical fear. Who does not the more honor, and wish to emulate, Prospero, the more bestial and foul the base Caliban by contrast seems? Thus Shakespeare preaches by the majesty as well as the ignominy of his characters, his only purpose being, however, to be true to nature and to fact.

But different than most of his contemporaries or predecessors our great master depicts every phase of life, the high and low alike, the plebeian as impartially as the patrician, the statesman no more keenly than the clown, the menial as perfectly and as truly as the master or the ruler. He does not select from the wilderness of human characters only a few noble and exemplary ones, that they may live with lasting and unchallenged impression in our minds. On the contrary, artist of the whole of humanity, he takes each and every character he meets, whether beautiful or ugly, fascinating or repulsive, worthy or detestable. More than that he was one of the first, if indeed, not the very first, of all great literary artists, who refused to confine his observations and creations merely to the dynasty of social aristocrats or the realm of culture and respectability. Like our modern Dickens he found as much if not more interest in the characters of low degree, in artisans, toilers, grave diggers, cobblers, masons, rustics and uncouth plodders.

Nor should the virtue of Shakespeare as the poetic historian be forgotten. The general reader who is put to sleep by the prosy narratives

of customary historians must find in the luxurious rhetoric of the Elizabethan genius much to whet the appetite and spur the desire for historic information. Beginning with the twelfth century, that epochal period of English history when the secular institutions were inaugurating their severance from subserviency to the ecclesiastical, in the reign of King John, he carries the entranced reader through the passionate period of the Reformation to the very advent of Elizabeth, transporting him with such abounding imagery and fanciful scenery that he full forgets he is perusing the dull facts of history—the veritable chronicles of the times.

However, the effect of the Shakespearean historical narratives is not to inform the reader of the actual facts, but to permit him so to enjoy the poetic glosses that his appetite for verity may be the more keenly whetted. He would indeed be most deceived who looked to Shakespeare for veritable chronicle. Yet while the body of the fact is so clothed with fantastic habiliment that it is well disguised, still the body exists, the frame work of truth abides. Indeed in this very grace the genius of Shakespeare most excelled.

Precisely as when he copied the story and the actual arrangement of the tragedy of Hamlet from Belleforest's, yet created a drama so wholly original because it was clothed with the glory and charm of Shakespeare's golden diction and inimitable imagery; so when he recites historical facts, while truth is there, yet it is so beclothed with dazzling garments that but its bare outline can be discerned. This splendid grace of genius is at once detected in his first historical venture, the drama of King John. There will always be those of such Nestorian countenance that they must needs witness naught but verity in every historial assertion. Such visages cannot be made to smile at the witticism of poetic gloss or the suggestive concealment of the figure by the modish garments that contain it. Thus there will ever be sour-visaged essayists who will ask with glowering sternness, "What were Shakespeare's authorities for his history, and how far has he departed from them? And may the plays be given to our youth as properly historical?" The superlative humor of such unconsciously clownish critics is a curious revelation of the dulness of even the cultured mind in discerning the illusive

spirit of poesy. Shakespeare is, of course, always the poet; never the mere narrator. The prosy chronicler gives the facts, and shudders at fancy; the poet is bent on fancy first, and fact after. Yet the chronicler dulls the fact by the absence of wit by so much as the poet illumines it by the wit the chronicler contemns.

Against such realistic criticism A. W. Schlegel has well said: "The principal traits (in Shakespeare's historical plays) are given with so much correctness, their apparent causes and their secret motives are given with so much penetration, that we may therein study history, so to speak, after nature, without fearing that such lively images should ever be effaced from our mind." The misfortune with all prosaic critics is that they cannot discern the idealism that clothes the cruder thought. Were Shakespeare less a poet he would have been the less a historian; for he shows how historical events may be so cast in poetic imagery as to impress them indelibly on the mind, while the words of the mere chronicler soon dissolve in oblivion. Were one to read an ordinary historian's description of the famous fleet which England sent out against Spain in 1596 under Essex

and Lord Howard, described as "1000 gentlemen volunteers, 6,368 troops, 6,772 seamen, exclusive of the Dutch, besides one hundred fifty sail, the navy royal, men of war, store-ships, the rest being pinnacers, vituallers, transports," etc., in Southey's words, how little would one find here to stir the interest or rouse the memory. But when described by Shakespeare, as some believe, in the words of Chatillon to King Philip in the second act of "King John," how does the imagery seize us as the splendor of a gorgeous landscape:

"England, impatient of your just demands,
Hath put himself in arms; the adverse winds,
Whose leisure I have staid, have given him time
To land his legions all as soon as I:—
. . . All the unsettled humours of the land—
Rash, inconsiderate, fiery, voluntaries,
With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens,
Have sold their fortunes at their native homes,
Bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs,
To make a hazard of new fortunes here.
In brief, a braver choice of dauntless spirits,
Than now the English bottoms have waft o'er,
Did never float upon the swelling tide,
To do offence and scath in Christendom."

Each line is an historical etching, each word is

fraught with veritable meaning. Shakespeare drives the student to his books; the listener he pleases with his words.

Studying the play of King John affords us an ample interpretation of the relation to actual history which Shakespeare cultivates in all the ten so-called "historical" plays. The first feature to be noted is that he does not resort primarily to standard historical works for his events, but to a wholly different source. It must not be forgotten that he is always first the playwright and the historian second. Therefore he clings closely to the stage traditions of his age. Now each of the plays has a stage precedent or a series of stage precedents. "The King John of Shakespeare is not the King John of the historians which Shakespeare had unquestionably studied; it is not the King John of his own imagination, casting off the trammels which a rigid adoption of the facts of those historians would have imposed upon him; but it is the King John, in the conduct of the story, in the juxta-position of the characters, and in the catastrophe,—in the historical truth, and in the historical error,—of the play which preceded him some few years." The

history of John had been familiar to theatrical audiences for about a half century. "Shakespeare had to choose between the forty years of stage tradition and the employment of new materials." But this very transfusion of new life, intellectuality, spiritual illumination and rhetorical grace into the dull veins of the old traditional drama is the supreme evidence of Shakespeare's unparalleled genius.

To read, by way of comparison for instance, the old play of Bale, called "The Pageant of Kynge Johan," is at once a disappointment and a revelation. It is a disappointment to see how utterly dull a prosaist makes a thrilling historical epoch; and a revelation to observe how magically the genius of Shakespeare transmutes the leaden dullness of the old play into the golden brilliance of his own.

Before quitting this phase of our study we must emphasize one more Shakespearean characteristic which is all too much forgotten. It is customary among those who are squeamish as to literary purity and intellectual morality to complain of much of the Shakespearean diction as being unqualified for parlour acquaintance and

offensive to the refined taste of modernity. We have often been reminded of the apology for the Shakespearean latitude in colloquial vulgarity by the fact that it was the custom of his age to indulge in such extravagances without doing offence to even the most delicate taste of his times. We have, perhaps, however, not sufficiently emphasised the fact that in this very particular Shakespeare was a genuine reformer, and because of the instinct of his native refinement, superior to the age in which he wrote, he set a standard far above that of his literary compeers.

This is especially evidenced in the play of Bale to which we have just referred, as it was the most popular and recent of the King John dramas of Shakespeare's time. Indeed it was the precise pattern which Shakespeare used for the modelling of his play. Yet Bale's work is surcharged with utterly unspeakable vulgarisms, unrepeatable ribaldries, nauseating insinuations. "A vocabulary of choice terms of abuse, familiarly used in the times of the Reformation, might be constructed out of this performance."

While Shakespeare was not a purist by profesSon, he manifestly enjoyed instinctive sensi-

bilities far more refined than the respectable gentry of his age. Indeed in nothing do we better discern the ultra divergence in manners between his time and our own than by the language he puts in the mouths of his characters. Much that they say, the words of Falstaff, Trinculo, Cade, Caliban, and many of the women characters, cannot be repeated in polite society today. But when we recall that it was polite in Shakespeare's day to use language, as evidenced by Bale, of so base and repulsive a nature, so unspeakably offensive that no modern book would be permitted to contain them, we may well imagine how serious and far reaching a reform in this regard Shakespeare instituted in his work.

Quoting J. A. Symonds, we may grasp a vivid picture of the period whose social customs Shakespeare so unconsciously modified, if indeed he did not reform: "What distinguished the English at this epoch from the nations of the South was not refinement of manners, sobriety or self-control. On the contrary they retained an unenviable character for more than ordinary savagery. . . . Erasmus describes the filth of their houses, and the sickness engendered in their cities

by bad ventilation. . . . Men and women who read Plato or discussed the elegancies of Petrarch, suffered brutal practical jokes, relished the obscenities of jesters, used the grossest language of the people. Carrying farms and acres on their backs in the shape of costly silks and laces, they lay upon rushes filthy with the vomit of old banquets."

It was in such an age that Shakespeare introduced the tenderness of Imogen, the purity of Portia, the virtue of Desdemona, the innocence of Miranda, the unpolluted abandon of Rosalind, and the misguided folly of Jessica. It was in an age of deceit, savagery, ribaldry and cunning that he exposed the hypocrisy of Richard, exalted the honesty of Othello, honored the faithfulness of Romeo, and bared the vice of the bloody ambition of Macbeth.

Thus may we discern the dark moral and social background of his age against which Shakespeare —the poet historian—spread the shafts of light that glowed in the heaven of his imagination. So replete with lofty idealism is his every thought and word that even when lisped on the vulgar tongue of his times it is not smirched or

fouled. He cast his myriad jewels in an age of mire which only after ages more refined discovered and enjoyed. His virtue as an historian lies in this: He discerned with the prophetic eye of the poet the instinct of virtue that lay concealed in an age of vice. Out of the mine of his imagination he acquired the rough ore which he so purified it has become the fibre and substance of succeeding civilizations. His history is at once poety, prophecy and prevision.

The charge is, however, made by some that although this wonderful writer wrote sympathetically with all manner of characters he was so much out of sympathy with the plebeian toiler that he pictured him in demeaning and ignoble colors. It is said that wherever Shakespeare refers to the artisan class he does so with the apparent purpose of exposing its offensive manners, its unreason and uncouthness. It is said that all his artisan characters are witless, feeble, the servile tools of their masters and but base and irredeemable underlings. See, for instance how Coriolanus raves and fumes at the common citizens who have deigned to criticise the government.

CORIOLANUS

What's the matter you dissensious rogues
That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
Make yourselves scabs.

FIRST CITIZEN

We have ever your good word!

CORIOLANUS

He that will give good words to thee will flatter,
Beneath abhorring. He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares,
Where foxes, geese; you are no surer, no,
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
Or hailstone in the sun. . . . Hang ye!
With every minute you do change a mind,
And call him noble that was now your hate,
Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another.

This sounds like most harsh and bitter language for a soldier to use against his fellow citizens, especially when he was pleading with them for office. It certainly presents a class of citizenship most menial and servile. It is difficult for us today to conceive of a mob so flaccid, cowed and

FORBES ROBERTSON AS HAMLET

Seems, madam, nay it is;
I know not seems. Act I, Sc. I.

enervate, as patiently to submit to such blackguardism and billingsgate.

But does this fact lie as a charge against Shakespeare? Does it prove that his sympathies are only with the patrician class and that he utilizes every opportunity to abuse and defame the toiling classes in his plays? I think not. We must not forget that Shakespeare never introduces himself in his creations. He is absolutely impersonal, and gives himself as a sort of wax tablet on which are to be impressed the infinite varieties of human character and disposition. When his patricians speak, they utter the language of the times in which they are cast; when they act they expose the mannerisms of their age. So too with the meaner or so-called lower classes. *The artist pictures them to us as they really were at the time he is painting.* Who can doubt, who indeed does not know, that the mob was as he characterizes it in his Julius Caesar, and that the oppressed and truckling toilers of the early legendary times of the Roman people, were truly characterized in Shakespeare's Coriolanus?

Yet, the charge may be made that he seemed to prefer to depict only those times in which the

masses were in a state of political dejection and social inferiority, ignoring better and nobler periods when the masses rose to superior conditions. We should remember however that Shakespeare wrote in the sixteenth century, before the masses had begun to do much original thinking and while they were indeed in utmost subjection to the supposed higher strata of the social orders. One wonders, however, why he did not find in the noble deeds of the Roman Gracchi, and in the Agrarian uprising which they instigated, as much inspiration as he did in the socially degenerate days of Coriolanus.

But, supreme genius though Shakespeare be, we should perhaps not expect from him more than human genius can attain. Even the loftiest of human minds must needs be somewhat circumscribed by the mental atmosphere of their times. Notwithstanding that a true poet can see far beyond his age, and often anticipate the events of the future by his spiritual discernment, he cannot wholly slough off the habilaments of his generation and live unencumbered in some far-off time. Now, without a doubt Shakespeare associated much if not almost wholly with those who be-

longed to the upper social strata of his time; with courtiers, gallants, chivalrous suitors and sponsors of the play-house. He mingled chiefly with the world of gaiety, pleasure seekers, the beau-monde. In his world the common people, the peasants, the rustic swain and the toilsome artisan, were regarded as beneath the consideration of a gentleman. What agitation, what sense of social revolution was rousing this submerged spirit, would scarcely be heard of at court, and if so would be laughed down with scorn and derision.

We must not forget that Shakespeare seeks only to be true to, to give an exact copy of, the times of which he writes. Remember he wrote at least two centuries before the revival or let us say the *birth of the spirit of humanity,* when all mankind began to think in lines of common interest and experience feelings of universal sympathy. As says Green the historian: "The England that is about us dates from the American War. It was then that the moral, the philanthropic, the religious ideas which have moulded English society into its present shape first broke the spiritual torpor of the eighteenth century."

Shakespeare pictures to us that *old* England,

the England of brutal selfishness and abomination. He writes of the England when the masses were held in abject subjection and absolute destitution; when the lazy clergy appropriated the food of the poor and the rich lords stole their estates. But he takes the side neither of the rich nor the poor, neither of the freeholders of the realm nor their servile villains and serfs. He merely draws a picture of the times by showing the actual characters that complexioned it.

When he depicts the Kentish insurrection under the famous if not infamous Jack Cade, he makes no plea either for or against him or his impoverished followers. He shows Jack Cade as he was, a brutal, unconscionable, uncouth and murderous leader of the mob. But at the same time he shows by implication the cause of the insurrection in the condition of the unfortunate followers of this violent leader.

When Jack Cade first enters on the stage, having assumed the false name of Lord Mortimer, striking his sword on London stones he exclaims:

"Now is Mortimer lord of the city, and now sitting upon London stone we command that the waste conduit, the first year of our reign, shall run with red wine."

Then to one of his cohorts, Dick, he exclaims: "Henceforth all things shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass," uttering in a crude way the wild though vague hope of the oppressed peasants that they may sometime possess the benefits of the gentry.

Shakespeare shows this Jack Cade, the rude leader of the peasant mob, as utterly illiterate and opposed to all culture and education. Thus, Cade taunts one Lord Say, who is brought in captive:

"Come hither thou Say, thou buckram-lord, what answer canst thou make unto thy mightiness, that thou hast most traitorously erected a grammar-school, to infect the youth of the realm; and against the king's crown and dignity, thou hast built up a paper mill; nay it will be said to thy face that thou keep'st men in thy house who daily read in books with red letters, and talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear is able to endure it. And besides all this thou hast appointed certain justices of the peace in all the shires to hang honest men that steal for a living, and because they could not read thou hast hung them up; only for which cause they were most worthy to live."

Now undoubtedly such portrayal of a peasant leader who instigated one of the earliest and most ineffectual of the revolutions in English history against the oppressions of the crown and enslavement to the lords and clergy, tends to remove from us all sympathy with him and inclines us to think that his revolt was not an insurrection against wrong, but simply an insurrection for plunder, violence and carnage. Shakespeare, however, is not responsible for this; for he is accurately describing Jack Cade, according to the historic records and chronicles.

Hence, to say that Shakespeare has no kind or sympathetic word for the toiling masses, the oppressed peasantry, seems to me a needless charge, because he never entered into a cause either to sympathize with or oppose it, but merely to record and picture it in such a manner as mortal man has never yet been able to surpass.

And yet how with but one stroke of the pen does he often reveal to us a whole volume of history, lift the veil of time far above the age which he is describing and afford us such vivid and comprehensive glimpses, they seem like sudden revelations!

In the very words of the characters we read the manners of the times. Shakespeare minces nothing. He uses not the chosen and dainty words of the cloistered poet, who would write but what would not offend the good taste of his literary lady friends; but he employs the very words, appellations and oaths that such characters actually uttered in life.

Among all artists Shakespeare was the most thoroughly realistic. He idealized only ideal characters. Where can be found a more innocently loving girl, chaste as ice and pure as snow, than Ophelia? Where else the very acme of native feminine innocence and poetic romance, so perfectly revealed, as in Miranda; or where else can be found the mingling of common sense and hoydenish gaiety, the worth of true womanliness touched with the sprightliness of girlish coquetry, more exquisitely than in the matchless Portia?

From the lips of such characters we would expect to flow only the stream of purest thought and noblest emotion. And never do they betray or disappoint our anticipations. Their words are always becoming and in perfect keeping with the characters they reveal. But on the contrary when

Caliban, Trinculo or Fallstaff speak they utter scurvy and offensive language, such as cannot be repeated in good company. But without such language such characters would be imperfectly portrayed. So true is this great master to his art that he absolutely loses his own personality.

It might be justly questioned whether Shakespeare really ever knew his own character or personality. He was so inwoven and absorbed in the particular character he may be portraying that his forms of expression, his emotions and passions, his mental moods and physical mannerisms become so perfectly those of the character, he must needs have somewhat assumed them in his own experiences. One who can become so completely abstracted in the creations of his art, and whose art is so prolific and limitless as was that of Shakespeare, must necessarily be but little with his actual self whatever that may be. His genius is so universal, his individual consciousness becomes continuously metamorphosed. It is indeed this impersonal quality in Shakespeare, that made him plastic and susceptible to all moods and impressions, and made possible the creation of such numerous characters through his inexhaustible genius.

He seems to have been a universal ocean into which flowed all the streams of human life and the inspiration of divine conceptions. On the mirroring surface of the vast ocean of thought which the genius of Shakespeare created, all humanity finds its perfect reflection. No thought has ever been uttered which he has not forestalled; no emotion experienced that he has not felt and vividly expressed. All history, all life, all human action, all philosophy, science and poetry flow to him intuitively and as freely as a cataract rushing down a mountain steep. Whosoever reads Shakespeare attentively, and with sympatheic inspiration, will ever feel that natural desire for greater knowledge which his immortal contemporary, Chrisopher Marlowe, describes in these musical words:

"Nature that formed us of four elements,
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds;
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wondering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,

Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all."

Tamburlaine; Part I, Act II.

Thus whoever allows himself to become one with Shakespeare in spirit and contemplation must needs grow in knowledge, experience and the ripe fruitage of inward wisdom. So gently does he lead us into every field of study and investigation that by listening only to his graceful lyre are we taught unwittingly and without sensible or annoying labor. As he himself writes of Henry V., we may justly quote of him in reference to his vast learning:—

"Hear him but reason in divinity,
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish
You would desire that the king were made a prelate;
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
You would say—it hath been all-in-all his study;
Let him discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle render'd you in music;
Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordion knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter; that, when he speaks,
The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,
And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,
To steal his sweet and honey'd sentences."

I do not say that Shakespeare is all in all the only author that the cultured man should read, ponder and digest; but I do say that whoso lives with him in thought, and drinks his "honeyed sentences" with his daily meat, imbibes at the very fountain head of inspiration, and hears the voicings of a deathless god.

A STRING OF PEARLS SELECTED FROM HAMLET

WITH ORIGINAL HEADINGS AND ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED

A STRING OF PEARLS FROM HAMLET

Ambition

My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body,
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

Appreciation of Friendship

Those friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.

Authority of Reason

Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd.

Bestial Man

What is man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

The Bestial Rich

Let a beast be lord to beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess.

The Bliss of Sleep

By a sleep to say we end
The heart ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

Brevity of Life

A man's life is no more than to say "One."

The Calumny of Virtue

Virtue itself escapes not caluminous strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd.

Caution and Valor

Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
Bear't that the oppos'd may beware of thee.

Character and Attire

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man.

Condolence of Friendship

You do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend.

Conventionality

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of action fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on.

Correct Method of Speaking

Let your discretion be your tutor; suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with

this special observance, that you o'er step not the modesty of nature.

THE COWARD

I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall to make oppression bitter.

THE COWARDICE OF CONVENTIONAL CONSCIENCE

Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

CREDIT AND INDUSTRY

Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

CRIMES' SURE EXPOSURE

Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

CUNNING OF THE INSANE

How pregnant his replies! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be deliver'd of.

THE DECOY OF FALSEHOOD

And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out.

DEMOCRACY OF DEATH

Your worm is your only emperor for diet; we fat all creatures else to fat us; and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but one table; that's the end.

DESTINY

There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be not now 'tis not to come; if it be not to come it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all.

DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS

There is such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will.

DRAMAS

These are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time.

DREAD OF AFTER-LIFE

Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn

No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear the ills we have
Then fly to others that we known not of.

ENORMITY OF CRIME

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there.

EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

Nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal.

EXTREMES OF YOUTH AND AGE

By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinion,
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion.

FALSE GRIEF

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes.

FAMILIARITY AND CONTEMPT

Be thou familiar, by no means vulgar.

FATALITY OF A SINGLE WEAKNESS

So, oft it chances in particular men,

That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
Their virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault.

THE FEAR OF DEATH

In that sleep of death what dreams may
come,
When we have shuffl'd off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.

THE FEAR OF GUILT

Let the galled jade wince; our withers are
unwrung.

FEARLESSNESS OF TRUTH

I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

FLATTERY

Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,
Where thrift may follow fawning.

FORCE OF HABIT

The use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either master the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency.

FORTITUDE

Blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingl'd,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger,
To sound what stop she please.

GHOULISH PARSIMONY

The funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

THE GLOOM OF MELANCHOLY

This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears to me no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

THE GOSSIP'S ART

Breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
. . . . . .
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind:—
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth.

THE GOSSIP'S FANG

Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape culumny.

GUILT ITS OWN DETECTIVE

Murther, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ.

GUILT'S SELF-ACCUSATION

So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

HEROIC TREATMENT

Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved.

HUMAN PROGRESS

The age is grown so pick'd that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.

HUMILIATION OF DEATH

That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once; how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if 't were Cain's jaw bone, that did the first murther;—and now my Lady Worm's chapless, and knock'd about the mazzard with a sexton's spade.

THE HYPOCRITE

We are oft to blame in this
— 'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage
And pious action, we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

INDECISION

Like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect.

THE INDEX OF THE FACE

There is a kind of confession in your looks
which your modesties have not craft enough
to color.

INDOLENCE

The fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf.

INOPERATIVE LAWS

It is a custom
More honor'd in the breach than in the obser-
vance.

INSANITY

Noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh.

JUSTICE AND FORGIVENESS

Since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murther,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen,
May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?

THE LASH OF CONSCIENCE

The harlot's cheek, beautified with plastering
art,
Is not more guilty to the thing that helps it,
Than is my deed to my most painted word.

LIFE'S PROBLEM

To be or not to be; that is the question.

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

LIP-SERVICE

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

LOVE AND LUST

Keep you in the rear of your affection
Out of shot and danger of desire.

MAJESTY OF MAN

What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

THE MANIA OF DIZZYING HEIGHTS

The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea,
And hears it roar beneath.

MEMORY

Thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain.

MERCY

Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?

THE MIND'S ILLUSIONMENT

Sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd,
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice.

MISCALCULATION

My arrows
Too lightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Have reverted to my bow again
And not where I had aim'd them.

MONEY AND CORRUPTION

In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law.

MOODINESS

And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,
His silence will sit drooping.

MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE

There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will.

NIGHT THE FRIEND OF CRIME

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When church yards yawn, and hell itself
breathes out
Contagion to this world.

NURSING AN EVIL SPIRIT

Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.

ON SINCERITY IN MOURNING

Seems, madam; nay it is; I know not seems.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly; these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within that passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

THE PARAGON OF A MAN

Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, aye, in my heart of hearts.

PASSION'S SELF-CONSUMPTION

There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it.

THE PERFECT CHARACTER

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observ'd of all observers.

PERIODICITY OF FATALITIES

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.

PERSEVERANCE: IN SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

POWER OF FORGETFULNESS

From the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there.

POWER OF THOUGHT

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

PREACHING AND PRACTICE

Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads.

PRECEPTS FOR CORRECT CONDUCT

Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
This above all, to thine own self be true,

And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou can'st not then be false to any man.

THE PUBLIC LEADER

The single and peculiar life is bound
With all the strength and armor of the mind
To keep itself from noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests
The lives of many.

PURGATORY

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away.

THE QUALITY OF FAVORS

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

RARITY OF HONESTY

To be honest as this world goes, is to be one picked out of ten thousand.

RELIEF IN SUICIDE

Who would bear the whips and scorn of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin.

RESIGNATION

For thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks.

RIGHTS OF AUTHORITY

Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

THE SCANDAL-MONGER

Slander—
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level as the cannon to his blank,
Transports his poison'd shot.

SELF-SATISFACTION

I could be bound in a nut-shell, and count myself a king of infinite space.

SENSATIONALISM

There was for awhile no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

SERVILITY TO THE RICH

In the fatness of these pursy times,
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg.

SUSCEPTIBILITY

A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

Sweetness of Vengeance

'Tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar.

Sword and Pen

Many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills.

Unity of Life

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

The Unity of Spirit

Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

Uses of the Stage

The purpose of the playing from the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

Vanity of Ambition

The very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

Vanity of Life

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw.

Veneer of Culture

Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter.

Virtue and Vice Contrasted

By virtue, as it never will be mov'd
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will waste itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.

Virtue of Prayer

And what's in prayer but this two fold force,—
To be forestall'd ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down?

Vulgarism of Popularity

Do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new hatch't, unfledg'd comrade.

Weariness of Life

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie o'nt, O Fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.

Worth of Appearance

Assume a virtue if you have it not.

MODERN LIGHT ON IMMORTALITY

BEING AN ORIGINAL EXCURSION INTO HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY POINTING TO A NEW SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

BY

HENRY FRANK

This volume is one of the author's most important contributions to the literature of the science of life, and carries the reader through the whole range of Nature and human experience, through philosophy and the natural sciences, through religious and ethical doctrines and beliefs ancient and modern. Freed from all traditional predilections and unimpeded by preconceived notions, he has traversed with a truly scientific spirit and in logical sequence the historical and philosophical ground of the doctrine; yet the scope of the author's survey is such as to make this retrospect only preliminary to the main theme.

For with this historical data as an introduction or background for the modern scientific aspect of the problem, Mr. Frank ventures, in the light of the latest facts and observations of experimental science, upon a heretofore untrodden way. The author's unanticipated conclusions, although unusual, are thus established upon carefully and properly sifted scientific data. Mr. Frank has realized that his conclusions must be derived from sources wholly divorced from any metaphysics or philosophy that was tinged with religious prejudice. So he has drawn freely upon such authorities as the great German biologists, histologists and chemists, and upon a score of recent scientific explorers such as Huxley, Darwin, Crookes, Lord Kelvin, and others. But the method of approach and the conclusions reached are wholly original, the volume thus becoming the expression of the

latest and most authoritative message on its tremendous subject. It is a book to compel attention and profound consideration and it has awakened wide discussion, as is shown by the following

EXCERPTS SELECTED FROM OVER 100 PRESS REVIEWS

San Francisco Chronicle:

"Extraordinary in the nature of its argument for immortality, a surprise to the author, who has frankly presented the result of his own individual researches, 'Modern Light on Immortality' is a record of the writer's explorations in search of a rational basis for a belief in a future life for man, during whose course he has ransacked the very Cosmos for evidence, and found it where he least expected it. Mr. Frank is a philosophical and psychological writer of some note, a member of the American Institute for Scientific Research, and founder and for over ten years speaker for the Metropolitan Independent Church, of New York City. Above all, he is a seeker after truth. . . Unwittingly and without design the author maintains that science has furnished the thinking world with certain data, which, while doing no violence to logic, may be utilized in forming a rational and more intelligent conception concerning the possibilities of the after life than man has ever been permitted to entertain in all the past."

Springfield Republican:

"The age long quest for assurance concerning an after life finds another explorer in the person of Henry Frank, whose voice and pen have made him familiar to a wide circle of readers and thinkers, especially among the liberal school. His explorations are presented in a volume entitled 'Modern Light on Immortality.' He calls it an original excursion into historical research and scientific discovery, pointing to a new solution of the problem. His method seems to be what he claims—original; we do not recall another approach to the subject along just these lines. Briefly stated, he discards all theories propounded by philosophy and religion, and through the new psychology argues his way to a belief that the human soul has the power of indefinite survival. His argument is in two parts. Historically he reviews all that is available of human

thought concerning immortality, the primitive sources of belief in the after life, the Druidic, Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldaean, Greek, Hebrew, Christian, conceptions, giving to the latter about one-third of the space alloted to this part of his research. Holding to a late date for the composition of the gospels, and that the Christian revelation or speculation, the best of all, is unauthoritative, the author closes the first part of the search for truth with the negative argument preponderant; the old arguments to him seem puerile, weak and ineffective, and he acknowledges that thus far the quest has been disappointing; and the author is left in the position of the Knights of the Round Table in their search for the Holy Grail—following wandering fires. In the second part the author starts on a new trail. . . Dr. Frank believes he has found the right path of the ultimate goal."

The Review of Reviews:

"Mr. Henry Frank, the minister of an independent religious congregation in New York City searching for 'Modern Light on Immortality' finds it in the researches of biology and physics. This is the instructive part of the volume; its first half finds only darkness on the subject elsewhere, even in the teaching of Jesus. 'Bioplasmic substance' constitutes a spiritual body within the mortal body, and this is immortal, the permanent abode and organ of conscious personality. To this, as confirmatory of the Gospels, no Christian need object."

The Lutheran Observer:

"A book with a bias, and a bias far away from orthodox Christianity. It is divided into two parts. . both discussions are interesting. . . The final conclusion is remarkable in that the author's maze of materialistic reasoning brings him in the end to what amounts to a doctrine of a spiritual body and a psychic personality surviving the process of death, for certain human beings who have attained a unitary self-consciousness resulting from the refinement of psychic 'cells' "

The Homiletic Review:

"The point of interest in this book is the original conclusion to which the author arrives. The cell structure of the refined physical body may persist after the coarser structure dissolves, being supported by nutriment correspondingly refined. Along with the

concensus of the psychic 'cells' having developed an organic self-consciousness by which they are in turn co-ordinated into a unitary working possibility, may correspondingly be supported by appropriate environment. This amounts to a doctrine of a spiritual body, and a psychic personality, surviving the process of death. This, however, happens only with those human beings who have attained to this unitary self-consciousness resulting from the refinement of the cells. This speculation is very interesting."

The Western Christian Advocate:

"The question of immortality does not lose its interest. The volume under review is an attempt at a most comprehensive study of the question. The author seeks to enter all realms of knowledge, and experience where light may be gained, and says that he shrinks not from the truths discovered. In a spirit of scientific enquiry he knocks at the door of nature, human experience, philosophy, science, history, and religion, and is satisfied only with an entrance and a careful examination of all these realms. Beginning with the antiquity of man's faith, he follows the evolution of this faith in immortality through the centuries down to the time of Christ. Shifting then from the historical and experimental phrase of the subject, he enters the philosophical and the scientific realm and seeks to bring their message to bear upon the problem. . . We do not hesitate to say that to the Christian student who seeks light from whatever source on the problem of immortality, the book will prove of value because it presents much that is truly original, thought-stimulating and pertinent to the problem. It probably brings together more material shedding light on the problem than any similar work."

Zion's Herald:

"The author of this book does not profess to have advanced an argument which finally proves the immortality of the human soul; *but he has made a strong approach towards it.* He started from a basis of much skepticism, not to give it a harsher name, with a sincere desire for the truth. He comes out with a very assured faith, much surprised at the result. He feels and has a right to feel, that 'his deductions are strictly logical and grounded on accurate and indisputable scientific data. It is a long process. . . . The author discusses the nature of matter, the generation of instinct, psychogeny or soul generation, the origin of organic life, physical origin of self-con-

sciousness, identity of substance, energy and spirit, physical and psychical immortality, and similar difficult questions. And. . there is another extensive treatise to follow, which will traverse the discoveries of modern research pertaining to the existence and powers of the 'Psychic Basis of the Soul' or the 'Unconscious Self.' We shall look for it with interest."

Times Saturday Review of Books:

"A 'Modern Light on Immortality.' The problem of the Future State on Evidence Derived from All Sources, discussed by Mr. Frank (here follows a column and a half review closing with:) There is much in this volume which will stimulate rational thought and enquiry even if it falls short of offering anything positive. The author is to be commended for industry, impartiality and the generally successful way in which he handles his facts."

Editorial from another edition of the Times Saturday Review:

ROBERT ELSMERE ANTICIPATED

"The story of the minister driven to doubt by scientific study was commonplace in the United States long before the day of 'Robert Elsmere," and Henry Frank, the author of 'Modern Light on Immortality,' lived it while he was yet one of the youngest members of the Minnesota Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was publicly informed by his Bishop that he could not be allowed to deliver himself of such ideas as he had come to entertain. He left the Methodist Episcopal Church and vainly tried to remain content with the creed of another. Before abandoning the effort he came to New York, founded a congregation of the most liberal nature, and served it for ten years. He found, however, that his people, being under no especial obligation to believe anything, were desirous of being assured on new grounds of the immortality of the soul, and set himself to look for them, not expecting to find any. History, exhaustively examined, left both him and his congregation where it found them; science compelled him to accept the disputed doctrine, and his book tells the story of his quest."

Providence Journal:

"Mr. Frank approaches the theory of immortality in a markedly original way. He attempts to ignore altogether tradition and to look at history and philosophy with unprejudiced eyes. Some of his conclu-

sions are rather startling. . . In his survey of immortality and modern science, Mr. Frank gives us some interesting conclusions. His knowledge is considerable and his ingenuity is even greater. . . But to give unqualified approval to all his deductions would be impossible. Nevertheless, the book is in many ways a notable contribution to original study of the problem of immortality; it is at all events worth reading. . ."

From Edwin Markham's review in the New York American and the San Francisco Examiner:

"'Modern Light on Immortality,' by Henry Frank, is a book that will be a consolation and a stay to thousands. It is based on the affirmation that science supports the fact of immortality of the human soul. Mr. Frank, putting out of his mind all the assertions of the ancient scriptures of all nations, searches through nature and human experience for some underlying principle that will throw light on the problem. He probes all religions, all philosophies, seeking for the grounds and evidences of immortality, and then examines them under the sharp light of modern experimental science. . . His scholarly, thoughtful argument is well worth study, and will aid many restless seekers after truth to find the peace that they cannot find in the old, simple act of faith. . . His conclusions will be found highly suggestive to all thinking minds, and highly consoling to all who cling to the nobler hopes of religion. I wish the book a million readers."

Universalist Leader:

"This is the book of one who has arrived at doubt concerning the entire Gospel story of the resurrection, and is searching for some other basis for faith in immortality. Henry Frank is a seeker. He joined long ago those who never pitch their tent permanently. They have taken to the open road. Whatever Mr. Frank says or writes is vital and stimulating. . . After elaborately uncovering what he believes to be the weak spots in the Biblical proof of immortality, the author proceeds just as elaborately to unfold what he believes to be the scientific proof of immortality. Whether he succeeds in making this change of base must be left to the readers of his book. . . Certainly, if one is looking for an earnest, scholarly discussion of the subject from one who has the mind of the critic and the instinct of worship, he could

go much farther and fare much worse then follow Henry Frank in his search for the clue to immortality."

Reformed Church Messenger:

"This book is undoubtedly an able one. It is admittedly incomplete, and, extended as this volume is, it is to be supplemented by 'another volume which shall traverse the discoveries of modern research pertaining to the existence of the Soul or the Unconscious Self.' A monist is the writer, a warm disciple of Haeckel, accepting most of his positions, but he rejects the latter's materialism, and throughout is not only profoundly earnest but is equally reverent. . . Altogether, it is a notable book and one which those who prefer to face as best they can and not to shun the problems of existence, will, in spite of a few relapses and imperfections, very heartily delight in."

Light, (*London, Eng.*):

"We must do Mr. Frank the justice to say that his 'Excursion into historical research and scientific discovery,' is devised on a scale and carried out with a thoroughness that must command attention and respect. His book is valuable in many ways, but is especially so as a fine exposition of 'Monism' on a loftier and larger stage than Haeckel's, and his special merit is that he does not so much oppose and reply to Haeckel as expound him and give him a hand up. He fully recognises that it is a real universe, that Nature is altogether a unity, and that what we call the soul is the 'organized expression, through certain highly developed physiological avenues, of that universal energy which everywhere exists as impersonal and semi-intelligent,' and which in man becomes self-conscious and supremely intelligent. . . It is well and modernly put, and it is valuable."

Chicago Post:

"It is a relief to turn to the scholarly work of Mr. Henry Frank, who goes to science for illumination on personal immortality. . . The book may be read with profit and enjoyment on account of the stimulating quality of such an attempt. Mr. Frank shows wide reading and scientific sympathy, colored by respect to the religious consciousness. . . He promises another book shortly which will elucidate his theory in regard to a subliminal self and its immortality. Many, however, will remain perfectly satisfied with the present volume for it undoubtedly points the way to that impersonal immortality which is satisfying to many noble minds."

The Interior:

"This work professes to be a thorough going reinvestigation of the problem of a future life without any bias or prejudgment whatever. Traditional teachings on the subject are set aside by the author as untenable in the light of modern science. Similarly, deductions of the doctrine of immortality from the Bible are left behind as of little value, since the author has ceased to believe in the reality of divine revelalation. Accordingly, the only source of approach to the truth left is that pursued by the scientists. An investigation of this sort has both a negative and a positive side, and the author gives both of these. The author seems to adopt Haeckel's monism, Darwin's theory of natural selection, Lord Kelvin's views as to the ultimate nature of matter, and in fact, almost every recent formulation regarding life, force and personality, combining all these into the theory of the soul and asserting upon the basis of this synthesis human immortality. It will be unnecessary to pass judgment regarding the validity of the synthesis. Stranger things have sometimes ultimately resulted in a successful, harmonious, philosophical system."

Twentieth Century Magazine:

"This volume is thoroughly rationalistic. The author views the whole subject through the glasses of the modern materialistic physical scientist, and for this reason his final conclusions are as interesting as they are surprising. In reading the work one cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that Mr. Frank is above all else a truth-seeker. He is thoroughly sincere and absolutely fearless. His writings display the splendid enthusiasm and tireless industry of the modern scientific scholar in studying the history of the past, the philosophical concepts of the ages and the deductions and generalizations of the master physical scientists of our day; and if we find it impossible at times to agree with his conclusions it is because in the study of the mighty problems of man, the universe and the potential immortality of the soul, we reason from different premises. . . It is a great book and one that is bound to challenge the thoughtful attention of thousands of persons who have been dazzled and won over by the modern physical scientists who have so wonderfully enriched the thought of the world."

The Open Court:

"In this carefully prepared volume Mr. Frank. . .

presents a thorough study of the immortality problem which he has finally succeeded in solving to his own satisfaction. Led by the insistence of his congregation not to neglect the subject, but to deal with it as he has with other themes from a scientific and rational point of view, Mr. Frank consented to take them with him along the path of inquiry. . . Beginning almost with the inauguration of human thought at the dawn of civilization he attempts to set forth the actual state of the human mind with reference to its oft illusive dream."

The Living Church:

"The author of this remarkable book, having, as he claims, divested himself of every religious belief and theological restriction, undertakes the stupendous task of weighing all evidence bearing upon the popular belief in human immortality with a view of arriving at an independent and unprejudiced conclusion for himself. He traverses the whole range of nature and human experience, he considers and analyzes all religious and philosophical beliefs, ancient and modern. Finally, he studies the problem in the light of the most recent experimental science and so he arrives at his conclusion."

The United Presbyterian:

"Of the author's ability, industry and sincerity, there can be no doubt. His book is a serious and sincere attempt at a modern solution of the ancient problem. . . While admiring the candor which characterizes the discussion, we dissent most emphatically from the author's positions set forth in chapters ten and sixteen, inclusive, Part I, in which he undertakes to account for the Jewish and Christian conceptions of an afterlife. In this part he seems to discard divine revelation entirely and explains the doctrine of immortality in terms of an enthusiastic Jewish chiliasm or of pagan naturalism. . . Paul's doctrine of the resurrection was based on the Eleusinian and Dyonisian mysteries. Elsewhere, by a stroke of genius he solves a riddle that has perplexed all commentators and exegetes, ancient and modern, by affirming that Peter was Paul's 'thorn in the flesh.' He also seeks to prove that Peter regarded Paul as 'Simon Magus.'"

Brooklyn Times:

"This book is especially timely and will be read with pleasure. . . It is a remarkable work in temper, disposition, in a certain clarity of idea, and in manner

of presentation. It is rare to see a man of ecclesiastic training pursuing a subject with so admirable a scientific disposition and temper and in so unbiased a fashion as does Dr. Frank in the present volume. . . The book is optimistic. It is the investigation into science that is surprising. It would be too bad to tell what the author finds; suffice it to say what he finds is astonishing. . . His only wish is to seek and to find the truth. Has he? We leave it to the reader. Our advice is that you read the book. You will find it worth while."

Utica Press:

"That the soul is to be rewarded with immortality is convincing to the author of this latest work on the subject. He is modest enough to feel uncertain regarding his influence on other thinkers. Beyond the argument for the indestructibility of the soul he does not venture, for these essays are based on the discoveries of science alone and she has dared conjecture nothing concerning the future life of man. . . Mr. Frank's original conclusions are worthy of a careful study and the results of further research, which he promises in a future volume, are eagerly anticipated."

Glasgow Herald, (Scotland):

"The work, 'Modern Light on Immortality,' must have involved an immense amount of research, both historical and scientific, and though the author's claim to be the only writer who has 'traversed the entire region' may perhaps be questioned, it must be admitted that in tracing the belief in immortality from primeval times downward, he has brought within the compass of a volume of moderate size a mass of information which is likely to prove of great value to those who come after him. But it is not on his historical studies but on his scientific investigations that the author bases his conclusions. . . These views are interesting as the result of lengthened and painstaking inquiry and as the final judgment of a man who set forth from a definitely skeptical standpoint. Whether or not they are accepted by Mr. Frank's congregation, they will not improbably meet with keen criticism alike from the orthodox and the scientific standpoint."

Large 8 vo.; 467 pp.; $1.85 net; $2.00 by mail.
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS
SIX BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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